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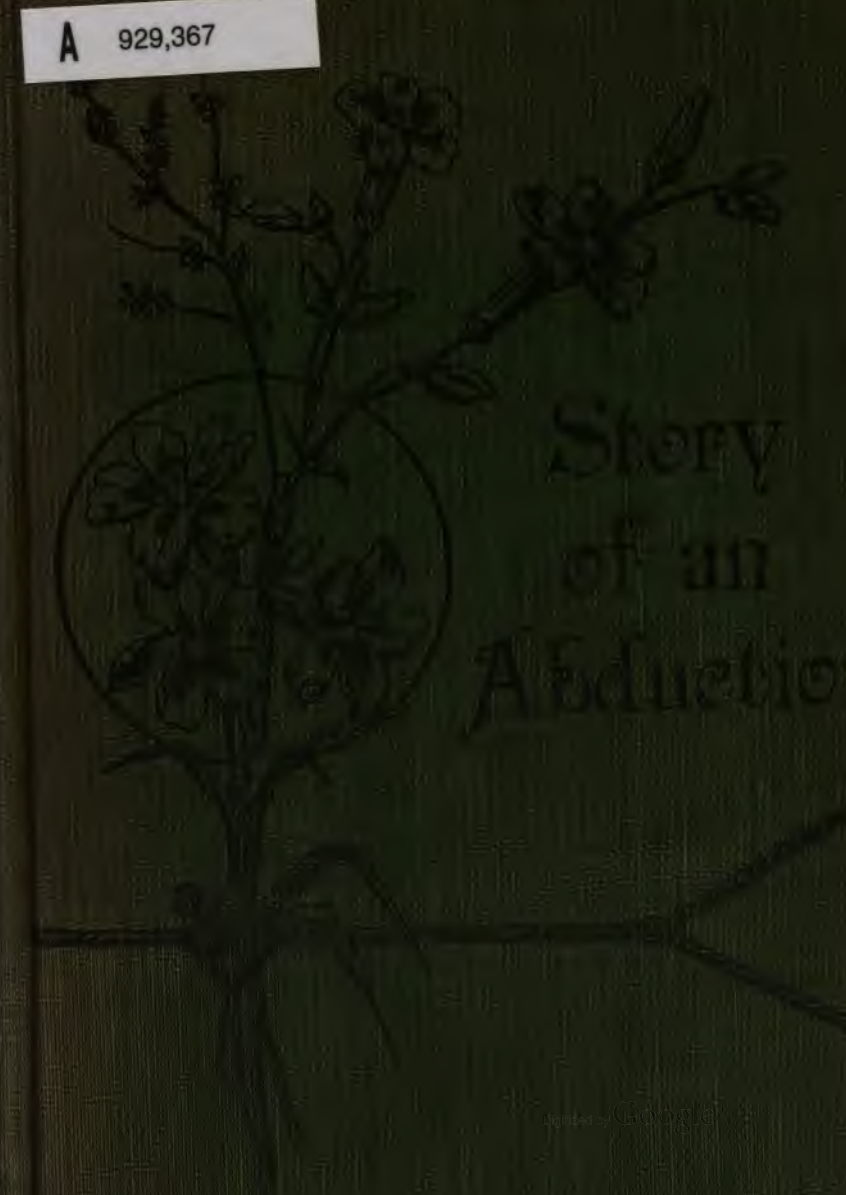
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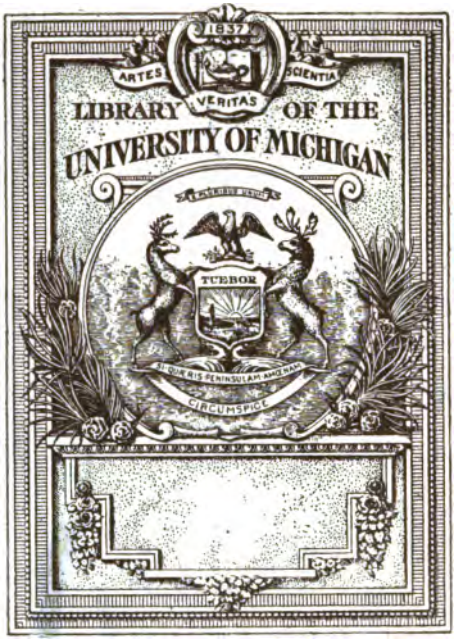
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THE

STORY OF AN ABDUCTION

IN THE

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY

J. VAN LENNEP

TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH

BY

Mrs. CLARA BELL

REVISED AND CORRECTED IN THE UNITED STATES

NEW YORK
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THE STORY OF AN ABDUCTION IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein the reader's familiarity with the Greek mythology is put to the proof.

Although nowadays the readers of works of fiction, even those who have had the advantage of a polite education, are not commonly so perfectly at home in classic antiquity and fable as they would have been forty years ago, still I suppose that even the least learned of them will remember that the fall of Troy and the death of so many thousand heroes—not to mention the warriors, seamen, women and children, who were slain, burned or drowned—were due to no other cause than the abduction of the beautiful princess Helen by that dissolute young libertine Paris. In verses which I

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will not here repeat—in the first place because I will assume no airs of learning; in the second, because it is unmannerly to address my readers, stern or gentle, in a language they probably do not understand, and in the third, because I should offend the ears of some among them who might understand—Horace says that more than one coquette before Helen's time had given occasion to a bloody war; and though we may doubt the genuineness of the instances he adduces from the mythological period to support what he says, still we cannot do otherwise than agree with him when, for example, we think of the slaughter of Schechem and his brethren after the abduction of Jacob's daughter Dinah, of that of the Philistines by Samson because his wife was faithless.

But not to linger in such remote antiquity, I will only ask some of my readers who have the history of the Trojan war at

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their fingers' ends, whether they know that only two hundred years ago, in our civilized Netherlands, an abduction of a damsel brought it about that a distinguished German prince was near being deprived of the possessions he owned in this country, and actually lost a part of the seigniorial rights he exerted, and that the free town of Bremen was almost drawn into a quarrel with our Republic? And yet the fact is true, beyond all dispute: Whoever doubts it has simply to open the fifth volume of Aitzema's "Affairs of State and War,"* and on page 144 *et seq.* he will find it reported and officially confirmed. But he will seek there in vain for the name of the Helen, for Aitzema, apparently because when he wrote she was still living, concealed it out of chivalrous good feeling (I will not hint that it was out of diplomatic caution) under the initials N. N.

* "Saken van Staet en Oorlogh."

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I therefore was long of opinion that the author who might feel prompted to narrate the adventure in the guise of an historical romance, ought to choose a name or invent a name whereby to designate the heroine; but I soon discovered that there was no necessity for this. Just as in the purified editions of the Latin poets the immodest and objectionable passages are eliminated by propriety, but generally printed altogether by themselves afterwards — apparently that the innocent pupil should the more conveniently find them and study them to his profit —so, though the name of which I speak appears in the text of Aitzema's work, as I have said, merely as N. N., it is, on the contrary, written at full length in the index.

I might here make an end, content with having attracted the reader's attention to the incident, and referring him, in case he feels urged to know more of it, to the

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worthy Aitzema, who tells the tale in his own naïf fashion; but I know the universal horror of burly folios which prevails in this age of duodecimos and light literature. May be, indeed, that this horror is the more vehement in proportion as the said folios are more wholesome in tone and contain less of what may offend the eye, taste, and heart, than our modern novels—which, in their small volumes, seem to vie with each other in vileness of paper, print, and contents. But as I see no hope of remedying this, it seems to me a not useless task to take up Aitzema's narrative, and, without curtailing it of any essential details, or adding anything but what seems needful to explain the facts or throw light on the characters, to lay before the reader these events of the past history of the Netherlands.

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CHAPTER II.

Which makes the reader acquainted with a young heiress such as, in the opinion of most bachelors, are become only too scarce nowadays, as well as with an adventurer such as are still plentiful enough.

AMONG the distinguished foreigners who, about the middle of the seventeenth century were in the service of the Netherlands, there was hardly one who, as regards family and birth, could compare with Henry Charles de la Tremouille, Prince of Taranto and Talmond, Duc de Thouars, Peer of France and Knight of the illustrious Order of the Garter. As to his skill in war, it would be difficult to pronounce judgment. He had served in the Hessian army before 1648, but after the peace of Munster, he went to Holland, where no opportunity of-

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fered for him to give proof of his merits as a leader in the field. There was no fighting going on; and none but the common rank and file had fared forth to take part in the wars outside the Netherlands, among others in that going on in Denmark. Notwithstanding this the Prince of Taranto was held in high consideration, particularly by the States of Holland. Since the accession of Charles II. had resulted in the expulsion of the Prince of Orange from England, this young prince's adherents were doing their utmost to raise him to the high military offices held by his fathers before him, and it consequently formed part of the policy of Jan de Witt and his party to take care that there should always be among the officers of State some men sufficiently illustrious by birth and name to be thrown in the scale against the son of William II. They found one in the Prince of Taranto, whom, to serve this end, they kept, as it were, *in*

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petto; and, meanwhile, the States-general conferred on him the command of the fortress of Hertogenbosch or Bois-le-Duc, an office in which he constantly acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his superiors.

At last an opportunity seemed to offer for calling him into the field. A dispute between the States-general and the Bishop of Munster, who at the end of the year 1663 had seized and held possession of Dylerschans, on the frontier of the Netherlands, seemed to threaten a war, and led to a call to arms. The chief command of the national troops was entrusted to Prince William Frederick, the Stadtholder of Friesland, and that of the cavalry to the Prince of Taranto, who also was charged with the duty of proceeding forthwith to Deventer, there to establish his headquarters. The Princess of Taranto was less pleased than her husband at the new honours conferred on him, and judging that a residence at

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Bois-le-Duc in the prince's absence would procure her small pleasure or amusement, she determined, with his consent, on returning with her family to the Hague.

Now, as it happened, when the news arrived of the prince's appointment, there was at his house a young lady from Zealand, with whom the princess had made acquaintance at the Hague, and whom she had invited to spend a few weeks with her. Since, in consequence of their removal from Bois-le-Duc, part of the prince's furniture was packed up and the rest had to be lent or sold, it was difficult to entertain their guest any longer. Moreover, the necessary preparations had to be made at the Hague for the reception of the princess and her household, so the prince thought proper to send his coachman, a man of tried capability and trust, named Nicolas, to the capital to arrange everything for the advent of the princess, and at the same time he was

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to serve as an escort to the young lady in question in her journey thither, and find her a suitable lodging. This plan, in fact, was carried out at once. Notice was given to the young lady's friends of her early arrival, and she set out in the beginning of the month of March, 1664, with her waiting-woman and the faithful Nicolas, on her way to the Hague.

Now, wishing her a speedy journey and safe arrival at her destination, we will take this opportunity to make the reader more fully acquainted with her; all the more because she plays an important, though a passive part in our tale.

Catharine d'Orléans, notwithstanding the famous name she bore, was not in any way related to the princely house which, at a later date, gave a regent and a king to France. Whether one of her ancestors may have imported the name when he removed his residence from the town or duchy in

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France to the Netherlands, and then bestowed it on the home of his posterity, is not known. This much is certain: the father of our heroine was allied with the most illustrious families of Zealand and of Holland; and she, by the death of her parents, found herself, while still very young, heiress to various and extensive estates in the provinces. She had been placed under the guardianship and control of her uncle on her mother's side, Heer Rixen, Councillor to the Government of Holland; and since not only those who held a post, however small, but all who were related to the officials — the *Suppoosten*, as they were commonly called — stood under the protection of the State, she, too, in consequence of her uncle's official position, was regarded not only as his ward, but as that of the State itself. Although Catharine d'Orléans owned a house in the town of Zierikzee and a pretty sum-

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mer residence in the island of Schouwen, Heer Rixen did not deem it amiss that she should spend a portion of the year at the Hague; in the first place, because after her parents' death it was too lonely for her to live in the deserted home, and also because here in the capital he could have her more under his own eye. The young lady herself had no objection, and although the councillor, being unmarried, could make no arrangements for receiving her in his own house, there was no lack of blood relations who declared themselves willing to give the young heiress a home, nor of elder aunts or cousins who would make it their pleasure to procure her introduction to the leading ladies of society at the Hague. That she was received with open arms on her first appearance there in 1663 is beyond a doubt. Whoever may look for a welcome from the world of fashion none are more sure of it than a young girl who unites gen-

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tle birth to a fine fortune. No wonder then that the appearance of Catharine d'Orléans at the festivals and entertainments of the aristocracy of the Hague attracted general attention, that she became the leading subject of conversation, so that even the dispute with Munster and the probability of a breach with England were forgotten, and that even the princess dowager desired to make her acquaintance, while the youths of good family fluttered around her like butterflies.

Now it fell out that there was at this time at the Hague a certain gentleman, by name Johan Diederick de Mortaigne, whose father had served with credit among the Swedes in the German war, and subsequently as commander-in-chief of the Landgräfin of Hesse's troops, and so after a brilliant career, had died in his bed of old age. The fortune he had accumulated, though not small, was insufficient to satisfy

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the requirements of young Mortaigne, who, having from his childhood lived at court and among the heedless young noblemen of his age, was devoted to gambling and women. He had soon dissipated his share of his inheritance in pleasure-seeking, and had to consider some way which might not ill-beseem his birth of procuring himself a second fortune adequate to his requirements.

It would have been an easy matter for him to obtain some military appointment in Sweden, where his father's name was still held in honour, but he at no time felt any disposition to bury himself in the cold and distant north so long as, near at hand, there seemed yet a chance of getting on. Holland in those days was the Eldorado, the Calfornia, the promised land to which all fortune-seekers poured in; the humbler kind to earn a subsistence by trade, shop-keeping or labour; men of family to find

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employment as officers in the army or in diplomatic circles, or at least to make their way through introductions and the influence of high officers of State from all parts of the continent for whom the Hague had long been a centre and meeting-place. Mortaigne, then, had found his way to Holland, and as he had recommendations to many of the distinguished foreigners settled and married there, the most fashionable circles were open to him.

It is not strange that Catharine d'Orléans — pleasing, young, of good family and, which was most of all in her favour, mistress of a fine fortune — should be in the eyes of the ruined Mortaigne a highly desirable prey; that he took the first opportunity of being introduced to her, and whenever he found himself in her company, pursued her with civilities and love-making; that she could never walk or ride out without meeting Mortaigne on foot or on

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horseback; that she never showed herself at the window but he went past and lifted his hat and feathers to greet her; nay, that of an evening he had music performed in her honour at the door of the house she inhabited. The damsel on her side showed little appreciation of the attentions paid her by Mortaigne, and treated him with such indifference and cold politeness as was not calculated to encourage him in any hopes of a happy issue. Did he really displease her? It is difficult to read a maiden's heart, especially when for more than two centuries that maiden's heart has ceased to beat. So much is certain, that if Mortaigne had no reason to hope for favour, from any demonstration on the damsel's part, at any rate no other suitor for her hand seemed to have a better chance than he, so that if she gave the preference to any other aspirant, she must have kept her own secret. We may here venture to conjecture

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—for it is very likely—that the girl of eighteen still found too much enjoyment in the gay and careless life she led to feel any wish to change it for the more doubtful advantages of the married state and the cares of a household. Moreover, if she herself had been inclined to think of marriage as possible, it was not to be thought of during her minority, and her guardian was not the man to relinquish the stewardship of her fortune, or to allow it to pass into other, and perhaps unworthy, hands through any weakness on his side, before the time fixed by law.

Neither these often-expressed and well-known opinions of Heer Rixen's, nor the coolness of Catharine's demeanour were, however, sufficient to induce Mortaigne to give up his suit; all the less after he had laid a wager at a noisy party of young people, where their brains were heated by wine, with one Chavallerie, a gentleman

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from Kuilenburg, that Catharine d'Orléans, come what might, should be his within the year. What was said on this occasion presently leaked out, and Rixen took occasion to warn his ward against all frivolous youths, more especially against such a rascal as Mortaigne.

He meanwhile cared for nothing, kept up his courage, and followed the object of his adoration wherever she went. Even when the winter was over, and she had gone at the beginning of spring to her country house at Schouwen, he moved to Zierikzee; and although as often as he made his appearance at the gate of her residence he was politely dismissed, he nevertheless rode every day up and down the road which passed that way, causing no small uneasiness to two old cousins who afforded the young heiress company and protection. Their uneasiness was not diminished when it was said that now and

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again, in the evening, men of suspicious appearance wandered about under the walls of the house; and they heard from a gardener that in the neighbourhood, up stream, a decked boat was lying, whose destination no one knew—all of which gave rise to suspicions that an abduction was being plotted. The cousins wrote of all this to Heer Rixen, who regarded the matter as of so much importance that he went himself to the spot. If any such enterprise had been in the wind, his advent made it impossible. The boat was seen no more, and soon it appeared that Mortaigne had left Zierikzee.

When at the New Year, 1663, Catharine returned to the Hague, her ardent admirer was already there, and renewed his attentions and courting, secure in the old proverb that the staying horse wins. Rixen was so much provoked that he and his fellow-councillors deliberately consid-

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ered whether no legitimate means could be found of getting Mortaigne out of the city, or, at need, out of the country; nay, that he half thought of applying to the government at the Hague to procure the banishment of Mortaigne by their aid on political grounds. Most welcome, under these circumstances, was the proposal made to him by the Prince of Taranto, that Catharine, with whom the princess had made acquaintance at court, should spend the winter with her at Bois-le-Duc. He willingly gave his consent. and at the same time warned the prince againt Mortaigne's vexatious courtship and plots.

Scarcely, however, had the damsel reached her destination with her protectors, when Mortaigne travelled thither after her. But he fared even worse than at Schouwen. Not only, when he paid a visit to the Prince of Taranto, was he received very stiffly, but the prince gave him to understand that he

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would do well not to prolong his stay in Bois-le-Duc.

But this did not end the affair. Mortaigne's valet, Vollenhove by name, a cunning and artful fellow, worthy of such a master, had already, at the Hague, made acquaintance with the servants of the family with whom Catharine was staying, and always knew where she went, and kept his master informed. He was now intrusted to ascertain, as nearly as possible, of how many persons the prince's household consisted, without betraying his connection with Mortaigne. To this end Vollenhove was to frequent an inn, where also Nicolas, the prince's coachman, spent the time when he was not on duty, giving out that he was a groom out of service, in search of a new place. In a short time, by his pleasant chat, he won the favour and confidence of Nicolas, who suspected no evil, and it was not long before the coachman let out that

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the Prince of Taranto, at table, had expressed his intention, since M. de Mortaigne seemed to find his stay at Bois-le-Duc so agreeable, of making that stay a permanent one, by having him seized and shut up in one of the cells in the city wall, there to spend the rest of his days. This intelligence disturbed our hero not a little; he knew that the prince, who, as governor of the stronghold, exercised an authority which no man dare question, much less dispute, could very easily find a pretext for having him—a stranger of no particular position—taken up as a spy or as a vagabond, and under such pretence cast into prison without a cock crowing; and he very clearly perceived that freedom in movement and action was a supreme necessity, if he was ever to attain his end. So without delay or leave-taking, he beat a retreat, returning to the Hague, and comforting himself with the thought that Catharine's residence

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at Bois-le-Duc would not last to all eternity, and that some day or other would see her at the capital once more.

Thus matters stood when, as has been said, Catharine set out from Bois-le-Duc for the Hague, attended by Nicolas and her waiting-maid, and also, as far as Breda, by an escort of well-armed horsemen, and so protected against all possible mishap.

CHAPTER III.

Containing, among other matters, all bearing on this history, a highly important conversation between Mortaigne and his valet.

It was on the fifth of March, 1663, that Mortaigne was sitting at table in an inn at Delft with some officers and other gay companions, when Vollenhove came up to him and eagerly whispered an entreaty that he would find some excuse to leave the

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room, as he had something of importance to communicate.

"Well!" began Mortaigne, as soon as he found himself alone with the man in the next room: "What have you to say important enough to disturb me in the useful business in which I was engaged?"

"She is there!" replied Vollenhove, extending the forefinger of his right hand and pointing to the wall, as though it were made of glass and Mortaigne could look through it on to one of the most remarkable objects ever seen.

"Who is there?" asked Mortaigne.

"Mistress Catharine d'Orléans," replied Vollenhove, pursing his lips in a scarcely audible whisper.

"Are you sure of that? Have you seen her?" asked Mortaigne, eagerly.

"She is there in a heavy travelling-carriage," replied the valet. "I recognized her as she put her head and arm out of the

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window to take a glass of water which the maid brought her. And if your excellency would see her and speak with her, you must lose no time; for the coach will remain here no longer than is needful to let the horses drink."

Mortaigne reflected for a moment:

"Who is with her?" he abruptly inquired.

"Only a woman — her waiting-maid, I imagine," said Vollenhove, "and the Prince of Taranto's coachman."

"Hm! indeed! And they are probably on their way to the Hague."

"Probably," replied Vollenhove.

"The coachman does not know that you are in my service," Mortaigne went on.

Vollenhove shook his head in negation.

"Capital!" cried Mortaigne. "Make haste to mount your horse. Follow the

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coach, see where the young lady alights, find out whether she means to remain at the Hague, and take care that by the time I arrive this evening, you can give me all the necessary information."

"This evening!" repeated Vollenhove, smiling to himself, for he knew by experience that when once his master was engaged as he was now, everything was postponed till the morrow.

"You are right," said Mortaigne, considering. "Listen. If you think it serviceable to the affair, come back here this evening and report to me; if you are of opinion that there is no hurry about the business, wait for me at my lodgings.—And now lose no time; but, above all, do not let the carriage out of your sight."

"No fear of that," said Vollenhove, and he went down stairs, while Mortaigne returned to the dining-room.

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"Well?" asked the gentleman, when he found himself in his rooms at the Hague once more, at about six on the following morning, while Vollenhove was busy relieving him of his stained garments: "it seems that your news could wait, or, at any rate, was not so important but that it might keep till to-day."

"The news is important enough; the question is rather whether your excellency is sufficiently himself to listen to it," said Vollenhove, with the freedom of a servant who is implicated in his master's secrets and knows himself to be indispensable.

"Oh!" cried Mortaigne, "the thought of Catharine's return had so completely taken possession of me that wine could have no effect on my brain; besides, the ride home this sharp winter-morning has blown away all evil fumes. Tell me at once what you have found out; I am ready to listen to you with all attention."

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"Well, then," said Vollenhove, as he folded up his master's coat and hung it on a chair; "in obedience to your instructions I followed the coach when it left Delft, step by step, and never lost sight of it till it arrived here in Hague and drew up at the door of Jan van Ruytenburgh's house."

"Who is Jan van Ruytenburgh?" asked Mortaigne.

"Does your excellency not know Jan van Ruytenburgh?" said the valet with some surprise, while he removed the lace-cuffs of his master's sleeves, and proceeded to put this portion of his attire carefully away in a card-board box. "Mine host of the *Arms of France* in the square, where your excellency once met some English gentlemen."

"With whom I played *lansquenet*, and who still owe me half of the sum I won of them," Mortaigne put in. "Yes; I remember the place, but the man's name had escaped me.—Go on."

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"I waited," Vollenhove continued, now on his knees to loosen the ties of his master's knee-breeches and shoes, "till the young lady had got out and the coach driven away; then I led my horse to his stable, but immediately returned and remained on the watch at the corner of the Gevangenpoort. — Here are your slippers."

"And what did you see?"

"I saw that the window of the room next the door, which was open when the coach drew up, was now shut, whence I inferred that the young lady had been put there."

"That may be," said Mortaigne, as he put out his right leg for Vollenhove to undo his garter.

"Presently, after I had kept watch for some time, I saw Councillor Rixen, who had probably been informed of his ward's arrival, come down the Kneuterdijk and turn into the inn."

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"I wish he had broken his neck on the threshold, the old fool!" growled Mortaigne.

"I understood," Vollenhove went on, now standing up and holding his master's flowered bed-gown ready, "that I should not see much more, and I was afraid of rousing suspicion if I lingered in the neighbourhood, so I made my way to the *Green Alleys*."

"The Green Alleys!" echoed Mortaigne astonished, and he held back his arms ready to put them into the sleeves of his bed-gown. "Where the devil can you find an alley that is green at this time of the year?"

"By your leave," said Vollenhove, "the *Green Alleys* is a very well-kept and well-known tavern, south of Den Bosch."

"Well known it may be," said Mortaigne, "but this is the first time I have heard its name."

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"When I say well known," replied the man with a bow, "I mean among folks of my class, for certainly the place is less fit for gentlemen of your excellency's quality."

"That I can well believe," said Mortaigne. "But is that all? In that you comforted yourself duly with brandy at the tavern, I do not doubt, without your telling me; and the gossip you may have talked there is to me quite a matter of indifference."

"That is just where your excellency is greatly mistaken, asking your pardon," replied Vollenhove. "On the contrary, I believe that any one who wishes to know the secrets of the Hague world, great and small alike, will hear more of them in a single evening spent at the *Green Alleys* than he would in six weeks' intercourse with the upper circles."

"May be," said Mortaigne, yawning. "What is it then that you learnt there?"

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"That is just what I am about to tell you. I had not sat half an hour nor smoked out my first pipe."

"You know I have desired you to give up that vile habit," said Mortaigne, "and that I cannot endure the smell of tobacco."

"Your excellency has certainly never had cause to complain of it," said Vollenhove, biting his lips with vexation at having forgotten his usual caution and spoken out: "I very seldom smoke, and always wear another coat than the one I come home in, while I take all necessary means to prevent its incommoding you."

"Aha!" said Mortaigne, "then now I understand how it is that my pomander-box and scent-bottles are so soon empty. But more of this another time. What did you hear in this boozing-house?"

"As I was saying," said the valet, and while he spoke he locked his master's rings into a mother-of-pearl casket inlaid with

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gold, "I had not sat there half an hour when I saw walk in—now, who do you think I saw, your excellency?"

"Probably not the prince, nor Master Jan de Witt, nor Monsieur the Ambassador d'Estrades," replied Mortaigne, crossly. "Am I here to guess riddles or do I know the low creatures who frequent beer-shops?"

"Certainly not the prince," said Vollenhove with a smile; "but some one belonging to the prince's train — Nicolas, the Prince of Taranto's coachman."

"Indeed!" cried Mortaigne. "That was a lucky chance!"

"It might—asking your pardon—have been a very unlucky chance," replied the man; "for in the tavern—or the boozing-house, as your excellency is pleased to call it—there were at least six or seven coachmen and lackeys of great families, all of whom knew me to be your servant."

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"Well?"

"Has your excellency forgotten that when I made friends with Nicolas at Bois-le-Duc, it was under another name? And was it not self-evident that as soon as he should hear who I was, he would be on his guard before me, and so mute that nothing more could be got out of him?"

"And how did you succeed in avoiding this?" asked Mortaigne.

"I perceived at once," replied Vollenhove, "that nothing could get me out of the scrape but sheer audacity. I went straight up to Nicolas, shook hands with him, bid him welcome to the Hague in princely style, aud asked permission to stand treat, which he at once accepted. He began, as I had expected, to ask me what I was doing at the Hague, and whether I had succeeded in finding a place; but fortunately the rest of the company crowded round with such a noisy welcome, and

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pressed about him all talking and shouting at once, that no one understood the question. I, meanwhile, contented myself with saying that I would tell him my adventures at another time. Then we sat down to supper. Every one asked Nicolas how he had dropped on a sudden from the clouds; and then I learnt that, in consequence of his master's joining the forces in the field, the princess was to come back here, that he was sent on to make preparations, and that Mistress Catharine has come with him; that by her guardian's orders she had alighted at Jan van Ruytenburgh's house, where she is to stay till the eighteenth, and then set out for Middelburg with her uncle Boreel."

"To Middelburg!" echoed Mortaigne, "and all within fourteen days! I firmly believe the girl will travel all the country round. This is indeed great news.—And you heard nothing more?"

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"Nothing of importance for the moment," replied Vollenhove.

"And will not Nicolas have heard from some one that you are in my service," asked Mortaigne.

"Certainly," said the man. "He heard it from my own mouth."

"Are you mad, fellow!" cried Mortaigne.

"Not yet, begging your pardon," answered Vollenhove. "But I perceived that he must hear it sooner or later, and so I thought it better to explain to him, as we walked home together, that I had not long since found a place, and that with you. I saw he looked somewhat taken aback; but still he is less likely to make inquiry now of others, and so find out that I have already been your faithful servant for years. I asked him with a most innocent face whether he knew you, and then confided to him that you were on your way to Hesse,

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where you had an appointment to the cavalry and that, at the same time you were betrothed to a noble lady there. He swallowed it all like sweet cake, and I am convinced that he, at any rate, is free from all anxiety concerning your proceedings."

"We will hope so," said Mortaigne. "But—on the eighteenth, you say, she goes to Middelburg, and to-day is the sixth. How the devil can we manage? . . ." And he here fell to thinking.

"Why, Jonker," cried Vollenhove, "we should strike the iron while it is hot."

"That is more than ever needful," said Mortaigne, staring gloomily before him, "since for more than a year now I have been wasting my time, my pains and my money. This cannot go on; my creditors will no longer be paid with empty promises; they become more and more audacious by pressing. The affair must be concluded by some means or other."

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"What a pity," said Vollenhove, shaking his head, "that your excellency did not seize the game last summer when she gave you the chance. The coast was clear, the gate of her country-house stood open all day; we could have watched the young lady out for her morning-walk, and it would have cost very little trouble to carry her off . . ."

"You are right, Vollenhove," said Mortaigne; "but then I still hoped that she would lend a willing ear to my suit.—Now I fear the chance is lost."

"Lost! And why?" cried Vollenhove.

"You cannot think it possible," said Mortaigne, "to carry her off, against her will, from the heart of the Hague under the very eyes of the authorities and watched by her friends and relations."

"Oh, greater things than that have been achieved," said the man. "With a little courage, and the help of a few sturdy

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fellows, that should not be such a difficult matter! I would even make bold to say that just the seeming impossibility of the thing might favour its execution. A man who goes a journey and must pass through a lonely place is on his guard against robbers, and takes measure to defy them; but here, in a populous and bustling city, he suspects nothing of the kind and takes no precautions against danger."

"Do you indeed regard the affair as possible?" asked Mortaigne.

"We carry off the girl," Vollenhove went on; "we take her across the frontier —the quicker the better—and do not return till all the family have given their consent to a marriage; and under the circumstances what can they do better?"

"But can you find any men who will stand by us, and who you know for certain will not betray us?" asked his master.

"Leave that to me," replied Vollenhove.

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"First of all there is your lackey, Feyt, who, when he has enough brandy on board, fears neither death nor the devil; then I know one Spinel, who asks nothing better than to take a journey abroad in good company, since he fears that if he stays here any longer he may have a score to settle with justice, so he would gladly disappear in time; the others I will easily find. And, moreover, since it is not necessary to tell them till the last moment what they are wanted for, we thus run no danger of their blabbing."

"I really believe that there is nothing else to be done," said Mortaigne, after brief meditation. "It is my only chance of safety at the moment. Besides, I have sworn that she shall be mine, and he who desires the end . . ."

"Must need desire the means," said Vollenhove. "Has your excellency any further orders?"

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"No, thank you," replied Mortaigne. "I am beginning to feel that I am tired, and you, too, must want rest. Perhaps it will be better that we should sleep on this business."

"No doubt," said Vollenhove, as he drew his master's curtains and pushed the warming-pan to and fro between the sheets, "since there is nothing to be done but to go to sleep."

In less than ten minutes after this discourse both master and man, each stretched on his own bed, were sleeping the deep sleep of the just.

CHAPTER IV.

Relating how the execution of Vollenhove's famous plan was prepared for.

After the plan for the abduction of the rich young heiress had been further discussed by Mortaigne and his faithful retainer, and

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the master had quite decided on carrying it out, both immediately took measures to insure its success. In order to give authority to the statement which Vollenhove had made to Nicolas, and so lull the suspicions of the young lady's relatives, Mortaigne told all who would hear it of his approaching journey to Hesse, and of his proposed marriage there; distributed trifling presents to his friends as remembrances; and sold his furniture and all that could be inconvenient to carry with him on such a journey. The demeanour he assumed was thus calculated to relieve Catharine and her friends of all fear on his account; but, on the other hand, it added to the fears of his creditors who now, not without reason, began to think that it was his purpose to evade them; they beset his door daily, and threatened him with exposure and a horse-whipping. Their pressure for payment caused Mortaigne no small embarrassment,

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since, for the undertaking he had in hand, he more than ever required ready money, and was less than ever in the mood to part with it. So he kept matters quiet as well as he could, paying some with fair words and promises and others with promissory notes to fall due in a fortnight, feigning generally to be sick or not home.

Vollenhove, meanwhile, was not sitting still, but making all arrangements that might seem needful for the success of the enterprise. He considered it necessary to have the assistance of at least four persons, and knew how to secure, in the first instance, that of the afore-named Spinel, to whom he gave a small sum of money in hand, with the injunction to hold himself in readiness for a call to action. He also wrote to an agent in Amsterdam, who kept a sort of register's office for servants, to send him a lad who could take the place of page to his master. The agent complied

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with his request, and soon after there came to the Hague one Roelof Goldestede, a youth of twenty, lately come from Oldenburg to seek his fortune in Holland. He, having presented himself at Mortaigne's lodgings, was quartered by Vollenhove at the *Green Alleys*, and enjoined to wait there constantly till his services should be needed, and meanwhile to eat and drink well. The innocent boy, well pleased with such an easy life, thought himself in luck to have found such a place, and regarded Holland as the land of Cockaigne, of which he had heard tales in his childhood, where it depended on himself alone to spend his days in luxury. Alas! how delusive are appearances. Goldestede was fated — as we shall see — to discover this to his cost ere long.

Besides these, Vollenhove bespoke the services of a Walloon, named Gonser, a runaway gunsmith, whom Spinel had recommended to him as a man able for any-

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thing and not to be horrified by anything. He, too, had orders to be ready at any moment to obey the valet's instructions, and to him was intrusted the duty of providing the necessary carbines and pistols for the whole party. Regarding these accomplices as sufficient for his purpose, Vollenhove now procured horses for them. As concerning a chaise, he was well enough acquainted with the driver whom Mortaigne was accustomed to employ, to know that he would trouble himself very little as to what use his vehicle was put so long as he was well paid.

After taking all these preparatory steps, nothing remained to be done but to settle the time, the place and the manner of the abduction. As to the time, both Mortaigne and Vollenhove. after mature deliberation, decided that it should be the evening before Catharine's intended journey to Zealand. This was so far very rash that supposing

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the enterprise were to fail that day, no subsequent opportunity would offer for repeating the attempt, at any rate by the same means; but, on the other hand, there would be no moon and they could act under cover of the darkness. Besides this, Vollenhove, who knew from the gossip of the men who frequented the *Green Alleys* everything that happened in the Court-circles of the Hague, learned that Catharine d'Orléans was engaged almost every evening at one house or another, and then always came home very late, at an hour at which it seemed impossible, under any conceivable excuse, to ask admission to her presence; while, on the contrary, the sharp-witted valet reckoned with apparent reason that if she was to be up early on the morning of the eighteenth to start on her journey, she would not spend the evening before at any festival, but more probably in her room and packing.

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The manner of actually carrying her off was likewise settled, and the road decided on by which they were to leave the country. There was still one very serious obstacle to be considered: namely, how they were to evade the host and the servants of the *Arms of France*, not to mention the coachman Nicolas, who, though he spent his day at the house of the Prince of Taranto and the early evening at the *Green Alleys*, was generally at the inn again by half-past eight. When Mortaigne and his man had held long council over this, without being able to hit on any satisfactory plan, they came to the conclusion that they would worry their heads no more about it, but wait till the day fixed for their enterprise and then act as the chance of circumstances might suggest.

At last the important day came; the indefatigable Vollenhove had neglected nothing which could contribute to the suc-

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cess of the stroke. He seemed to be everywhere at once—in his master's room, where he packed everything that Mortaigne thought worth the trouble of taking away into various valises, which lay on the table and chairs, so that all might go into the smallest space,—in the stables, where he gave Feyt, the lackey, the necessary instructions for the care of the horses, and saw that nothing was lacking to the saddles, that there was no fear of a buckle slipping or a rein breaking to cause delay on the journey;—out on the square, where the four confederates had been ordered to wait, reminding them that they were to be at the rendezvous in good time; at the driver's lodgings, to convince himself that the chariot was strong enough, and to impress on the fellow once more that he must well grease the axles and see that all was in good order; in the shops, procuring such things as he still thought needful, or

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fetching this or that which had been forgotten; at the *Green Alleys* in the hope of picking up some little news which he might turn to good account; in short, he showed such zeal and address that the only pity was that it should not be directed to a more praiseworthy enterprise.

Meanwhile the hour had arrived at which he must come to a definite resolution as to the way of getting rid of those persons who might prevent their carrying out their purpose. So far as the inn-servant was concerned, from what Vollenhove had learnt, he was not averse to a drink, and whenever he had a moment free, he would be off to a certain pot-house on the Spui where Spinel and Gonser also were wont to spend most of their time. This pair were instructed by Vollenhove to lure the man thither in the course of the afternoon, and to take care that he did not leave the tavern, or not till he was dead

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drunk; but, at the same time, he impressed it strongly on them that they themselves were to keep sober—an injunction which may in a sense be regarded as superfluous, since both Spinel and Gonser belonged to a class of men who are always in the same condition, and who, while they are never sober, at the same time are never found incapable. They acquitted themselves of their task with credit, when, at about six o'clock, they came out of the beer-house, Stoffel, of the *Arms of France*, lay very peacefully asleep under the table, and they had made the tapster solemnly promise that he would not disturb his sweet slumbers for the next three hours. Thus one of the men who might have put a spoke in the wheel was made harmless. We shall presently see how Vollenhove contrived to cheat the vigilance of the other two.

It was about seven in the evening when the various actors in the drama that was

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about to be played, met at the appointed place, the coach-house, namely, of the driver Tyssen, in Nieuwstraat, not far, therefor, from the *Arms of France* Inn. It was a picturesque scene, the motley figures in the dark room, lighted only by the feeble glimmer of a lantern hanging from the ceiling, lost now and then in the shadow of the chariot which stood ready in the middle. This vehicle had two seats; the back-seat, covered with plush cushions, was shut off by a wooden panel from the front box, where the driver sat, while behind it Mortaigne's valises had already been stowed. The horses were not yet harnessed, but stood with the riding-horses in the adjoining stables.

In front of the carriage Mortaigne, wrapped in a thick black cloak, with a brown hat, quite covering his head, and pulled down so as to conceal his features, was rushing to and fro in anxious expecta-

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tion, still quite resolved to carry out his purpose, and yet unable at the decisive moment to shake off his anxiety as to the unknown issue. At one of the doors stood Feyt, a square-set, strongly built rascal, who just now had exchanged his hat of feathers for a coloured cap, and his livery-coat for a plain brown one and grey freize overalls. He was counting over the fire-arms which had been intrusted to his keeping, and which were lying for the moment in the chaise. At one side, on a sack of straw against the wall, sat Spinel and Gonser, wrapped in their cloaks; the former, a small, lean, contemptible-looking rogue, with tanned features, and sharp eyes, and an appearance altogether indicating craft rather than strength; the other, a short, stout, clumsily-made fellow, whose dull, squinting eyes, flabby fat cheeks, and thick lips with thin black moustache, composed a whole little fitted to produce a favourable

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impression of his character on any who should meet him. Finally, in the middle of the coach-house stood Goldestede, who hardly dared stir from his place and gazed with an expression of mingled stupidity and respect at Mortaigne, whom he had first seen and known as his master this very day. He was wholly ignorant of what was in the wind, and of what service might be required of him; but he was clearly not at ease, and had an ill-defined feeling that the good time of feasting was now gone and past for him. The post-boy and groom, in the meantime, were going to and fro between the coach-house and stable, awaiting the order to harness the horses.

But what had become meanwhile of the indispensable main-spring of the whole affair, the zealous Vollenhove? Had he forgotten the enterprise, or left his master in the lurch at the moment of its execution? Far from it. He was absent only

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because he would intrust to no one but himself the duty of watching the *Arms of France* that evening. Although darkness had long since closed in, there was still no light in the room occupied by Catharine d'Orléans, and he was bent on assuring himself with his own eyes of the moment of her return home. To this end he was loitering up and down the square, wrapped in a thick cloak, standing alert at every sound of a vehicle or of approaching foot-steps, and scarcely taking his eyes off from the door of the inn. In our days his persistent pacing to and fro would not long remain unnoticed by the passer-by or, at any rate, by the town-watch; but at a time when street-lamps were as yet unknown, and in a dark night, it was almost impossible to recognize, or even to discern any one who was careful to keep out of the narrow circle of feeble rays cast on the street-pavement by a corner-light here, or house-lamp

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there, or, a little further on, by the lantern of the Gevangenpoort.

The clock of the great church had struck eight, half past eight, nine,—and still the damsel did not appear. Vollenhove was beginning to be impatient, and to fear that she had been detained by friends and would come home so late that the attempt could no longer be made with any chance of success. While he stood grumbling to himself, considering what was to be done, he felt himself suddenly seized from behind. Clapping his hand, which was hidden under his cloak, on a sharp cutlass which he had about him in case of need, he hastily turned round, but let the weapon slip back into its sheath, when, in the figure before him, he recognized his master.

"Ho! Jonker!" he whispered. Your excellency here? This is against the bargain."

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"I could hold out no longer there, in the coach-house," said Mortaigne. "Impatience drove me hither. — Is she not yet come home?"

"I wish I had seen her instead of you. For Heaven's sake go back," replied Vollenhove; "if the five rascals in the coach-house there once begin to discuss this business, it is ten to one that one or another of them takes fright and leaves us in the lurch."

"Pooh!" said Mortaigne. "They will not leave us in the lurch; it is the girl who. . . ."

"Silence!" said Vollenhove, hastily interrupting him and drawing him aside. "I hear footsteps—people are coming this way —there is a light flickering. Victory? It is she."

And dragging his master across to the other side of the way, he stood holding his breath, and eagerly watching the narrow

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street down which the party were approaching. First came Nicolas, with a cudgel in one hand and a lantern in the other; he was followed by two women walking arm in arm, although their evident difference of rank was marked by the fact that while one wore a silk wrapper, the other had only a cloth cloak. The three were attended by a lackey in the livery of the Boreels with a rapier at his side and a torch in his hand. Although the women's features were almost completely veiled, Mortaigne recognized Catharine's figure and walk. She had spent the evening with her aunt, Mistress Boreel, and was now returning home under a trusty escort as has been seen.

Vollenhove cautiously drew his master further back, till they were standing on the Kneuterdijk, behind the corner-house, so as to be out of the two-fold circle of light cast down the street by the flambeau and the

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lantern. From thence they could see the party stop at the door of the hostelry. Nicolas knocked, and Jan van Ruytenburgh himself came to open it. The two women went in, followed by Nicolas, while the footman returned by the way by which he had come.

"At last," said Vollenhove, drawing a deep breath. "Now there is no time to lose."

"But how are we to evade the watchfulness of that spoil-sport coachman?" asked Mortaigne.

"Leave that to me," replied Vollenhove. "I will remain here. Do you please to return to the stables; bid Tyssen put the horses in, and send Spinel and Feyt to me. —Or no; Feyt might be recognized. Send me that country lad,—but be quick, let me entreat you; I will wait on this doorstep—and tell Spinel to leave his cloak behind him."

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Mortaigne did as he was requested without any discussion, and it was not long before the two men of whom Vollenhove had spoken stood before him,

"Goldestede," said the valet, addressing the youth first, "now you have a chance of showing that you are the sharp fellow which I took you for at first sight. You see that house where the light is burning?"

"Aye, to be sure," said Goldestede. in his broad accent.

"Well, then; go to the door and knock, and ask for Nicolas, the Prince of Taranto's coachman."

"Aye," said the lad, and was just off.

"Stop a minute," Vollenhove went on, holding him back. "What are you to say to him?"

"Aye," said Goldestede, scratching his head behind his ear, "true enough, I should say that Monsieur Vollenhove was out here and wanted to speak with him."

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"Well, that is not so bad," said Vollenhove. "But it is not exactly what I want you to say; on the contrary, if you say one word about me or the Jonker, I will shoot you dead, as sure as I stand here."

"By all the saints!" cried the terrified German, starting back.

"Nay, do not be alarmed, for it is only a jest," said Vollenhove. "Listen. You know Nicolas, don't you? You have seen him at the *Green Alleys*."

"The man with the stout pack-horse," said Goldestede, "and the hat trimmed with gold braid."

"The very same. Well then; when he comes down, say to him that his wife has come to the town and is stopping at the *Green Alleys*, and that she wants to see him at once."

"His wife!" exclaimed Goldestede. "But I know nothing about his wife."

"You have got to know about her," said

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Vollenhove, still in the most subdued tone. "Listen to me, youngster. I have only one thing more to say to you. There is a crown for you to earn if you do your errand well, and a thrashing if you play the fool. I tell you once more: go and tell Nicolas that his wife is staying at the *Green Alleys*, that she wants to speak to him, and that she asked you to go to fetch him. Now, repeat the message."

"But I have neither seen nor spoken to the woman," urged Goldestede.

"I tell you that has nothing to do with it," insisted Vollenhove. "Repeat my words."

Goldestede did so; but it was not till Vollenhove had said them once or twice that the lad knew his lesson properly.

"Now be off," said the valet, hardly able to contain his impatience. If, by any chance, Nicolas should ask you how his wife made the journey, tell him 'by boat

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from Leyden,' and if he asks you what she looks like, answer 'a handsome sort of woman;'—it always flatters a man when any one calls his wife good-looking," he added, turning to Spinel with a laugh.

"By boat from Ley'en—a handsome sort," repeated Goldestede. "Very good, I will say so."

"And then, when you have done your errand and Nicolas has promised to go, run back as fast as you can to Tyssen's stables. Now, be off with you."

"Well, if that ass does his errand properly, I shall be astonished," said Spinel.

"We have no choice," said Vollenhove, "and something must be left to good luck. —But hush! He is knocking. Aha! Ruytenburgh has come to the door."

"But has the coachman a wife at all?" asked Spinel.

"At any rate, he says he has," replied the other. "He has talked of her

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till I was sick of it and my ears were ready to split, and of how she could not go with him to Bois-le-Duc, but had gone to stay with her own people in Gelderland; and how he had written to her to come here, and how he expected her. — But there he is with a candle in his hand. Now do your errand well, you noodle! — Look how astonished the dolt looks—my word, I believe the pill is going down; he is going back down the street. Make haste, boy."

And Goldestede, as though he could hear him, turned on his heel and ran off as fast as he could away down the Nieuwstraat.

"Now I give him five minutes to put on his cloak and trim his lantern and tell the young mistress that he is going out," said Vollenhove; "but then he must be on his way."

The five minutes were not yet past,

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when they saw the door of the inn open again, and some one came out, but without a lantern; he walked heavily past the Gevangenpoort, along the green walk by the Vijverberg.

"He is out of the way, at any rate," said Vollenhove. "Now you must relieve us of the innkeeper, Spinel."

"Very good;—and how?"

"By telling him that his man has been fished out of the Spui drowned, and that he is required to proceed immediately to the *Green Grapes* tavern, where the fellow is lying."

"Aye, and that is no more than half a lie," said Spinel; "it will not weigh heavy on my conscience. I have crammed folks with worse things to swallow than that."

With these words he went forward and knocked at the inn-door. The innkeeper soon appeared, in a pretty temper at his

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man's long absence, and heard the tidings brought by Spinel with no small consternation. However, whether he was by nature suspicious, or whether he did not like Spinel's looks, he did not more than half-believe his story.

"Very well," said he, after thinking a minute, "I will go with you."

This did not at all meet Spinel's views; but he rightly perceived that if he made off, Ruytenburgh would regard the thing as a hoax, and never quit the house. He declared himself ready to wait for him, and the innkeeper, after going in to explain the case to his wife, soon returned with his cap on and an old hunting-spear in his hand.

"Come on," he said to Spinel, "it is not so dark but that we can find our way. Give me your arm, and *en route*, as the French say."

Vollenhove would scarce believe his eyes when, a few minutes later he saw, by

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the light of the lamp over the Gevangenpoort, two men instead of one pass through the gate-way, who were presently lost in the darkness on their way to the Buitenhof.

"Well!" thought he to himself, after some reflection, "the coast is clear, at any rate, and Spinel must look out for himself how to shake the old fellow off his shoulders. We cannot wait till they come back again."

Spinel, in fact, arm in arm with the burly innkeeper, who was a head taller than he and evidently not disposed to trust him, was not at all at his ease. In a moment, indeed, when they were alone together in the middle of the Buitenhof, it occurred to Spinel to draw his knife and kill his companion by a well-directed thrust; but, unfortunately—or rather most fortunately—his right arm was closely linked in Ruytenburgh's left, which held it like a vice, and he feared that a cut dealt with

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the left hand might not hit true, in which case he could but fear the worst. He consequently decided to make a virtue of necessity and go on with a good will; meanwhile he answered all the innkeeper's questions without hesitation, and told him a perfect romance as to how the poor tapster had been found, ending his tale with a strong hint that he expected a handsome reward for his pains.

At last they stood in front of the *Green Grapes* by the Spui, and Spinel hoped that Ruytenburgh would now release him; but again he had reckoned in the most literal sense without the host, for he, pushing open the door with his right hand, dragged Spinel in with his left.

"One thing is lucky," thought Spinel. "At any rate, he will find his man drowned —not, indeed, in water, but in brandy. If only the ass of a tapster will understand my signals, all is not yet lost."

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But instead of finding the man still under the table where he had left him, the first thing he saw on entering was the luckless Stoffel as pale as death, and with a distracted mien, standing in the middle of the tap-room and trying to tear himself free from the tapster who held him tight.

"You see him, Monsieur Spinel!" said the tavern-keeper, as soon as the pair went in. "He will positively not listen to good advice, and in spite of my warnings will go out into the street."

"How rash!" said Spinel. "Signeur Ruytenburgh, you surely have some influence over him. Persuade him that he needs rest."

"But, what the devil! — Is he come to life again? I thought he was laid out a corpse."

"Yes, he was indeed a corpse when I left him just now," said Spinel. "Wasn't he, Meeuwis?"

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"A corpse — yes — but . . . " answered the tapster, who did not understand the expression as used by Ruytenburgh.

"So that I am all the better pleased to see the poor wretch so far restored already," said Spinel. "But do me a favour, Signeur Ruytenburgh.—Set my arm free; for, with your powerful elbow you have squeezed and pinched it till I am crippled. Stoffel there will give you better support than I can."

Ruytenburgh was apparently of the same opinion; he released Spinel and went up to his man, who stood staring at him with the bewildered gaze, open mouth, and stupid expression of a drunkard.

"What nonsense is this?" cried Ruytenburgh. "The rascal is not a sop, but a sot. What rubbish has the man been telling me?" And as he spoke he turned round; but it was only to see the door fall to

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through which Spinel, taking advantage of the first moment of freedom, had instantly vanished.

We will leave the host of the *Arms of France* in the pot-house, seeking the clue to what was still a mystery to him, and return to Tyssen's coach-house.

There everything now was ready; the driver had harnessed the horses to the chaise and drawn it out into the street; the riding-horsès were saddled, and Mortaigne, who had already heard from Goldestede that Nicolas was out of the way, stood anxiously awaiting the return of the others. It was not long before Vollenhove made his appearance.

"The coast is clear!" he cried, "and the pirates may show themselves. So now to work at once. Where is your boy, friend Tyssen?"

"Outside," was the answer. "He is holding the horses."

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"Good! Let him hold them till we return. And do you drive at once to the corner of the Kneuterdijk and the Square. Turn round and stay till we come."

The driver mounted his box and prepared to do as he had been ordered.

"Wait a minute," said Vollenhove; he tossed his hat and cloak into the chariot, and stood before the rest of the party in a freize doublet, a gaudy-checked comforter, a waistcoat with many buttons, baggy breeches and woollen hose, so that he looked exactly like a boatman or sailor; he completed his disguise by taking out of the chaise a round fur-cap, which he clapped on his head.

"Now," said he, "I will go to the house, as agreed; your excellency will follow with Feyt; Gonser must account for the waiting-maid, and this brave fellow"—and he slapped Goldestede on the shoulder—"shall cover the rear."

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"And Spinel?" asked Mortaigne. "Where is he?"

"He is taking a walk with the innkeeper," replied Vollenhove, "and will be with us again by the time he is wanted. At any rate, we cannot wait for him.—Now, forward quick, march!"

CHAPTER V.

Telling how that Catharine d'Orléans was carried away from the Hague, with other matters worthy to be known.

MORTAIGNE and his confederates, two and two, following each other at a short distance so as not to arouse suspicion, had soon reached the Square, at the heels of Vollenhove. Here the valet once more impressed on each the part he was to play, and then knocked at the door of the *Arms of France*. The other four stood close un-

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der the wall in the shadow of the door. The maid-servant opened the door, but scarcely an inch, for she apparently feared to let any stranger in now that there was not a man in the house.

"Is Mistress d'Orléans lodging here?" asked Vollenhove.

"Yes, she is," replied the girl. "But I believe the young lady is in bed. Did your excellency want to speak to her?"

"Indeed I do," replied Vollenhove. "I am a ship's-captain from Zierikzee, and I have a letter for the lady, which I am charged to deliver into her own hand."

The maid held the candle she carried closer to Vollenhove's face, examined him from top to toe, and then, seeing nothing in his appearance to contravene his words or to arouse her suspicions, she let him pass in and said he might declare his message to the young lady. She set down her candle before she vanished, but hardly

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had she disappeared down the passage leading to Catharine's room when Vollenhove opened the front door again as softly as possible, and signalled to Mortaigne, who came in with Feyt and Gonser; and thereupon Vollenhove blew out the light.

In one point Mortaigne and Vollenhove had miscalculated their plans. Catharine was not, as they had imagined, engaged in packing. Her trunks were already packed; she had passed the evening with her aunt, Mevrouw * Boreel, and had returned, as we have seen, only half an hour since with her waiting-woman. Thus, at the moment, she had nothing to do but to go to bed, and was already half undressed when the chamber-maid tapped at her door, and when her own maid opened it and delivered her errand.

"I cannot see any one," said Catharine. "Ask him if he cannot give you the letter

* Madam, or my lady.

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which he has brought, and send me his message."

"He said he must positively speak to the young lady herself."

"But is this an hour to call on any one?" cried Catharine angrily. "Lottie, go with the girl and hear what the man has to say."

The waiting-woman did as her mistress bid her, and went with the girl to the hall where Vollenhove met her.

"How is this?" cried the chamber-maid. "The light out!"

"The draught blew it out," said Vollenhove. "Here is your candlestick, child.—Well—can I see the young lady?"

"She wants to know whether you cannot give me the message," said the waiting-woman.

"Impossible," said Vollenhove, "I will explain to you; I must positively see the lady before she leaves to-morrow morn-

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ing; her aunt Van Citters is dead, as this letter tells her; but I am required to hand it to her in person, and to break the news to her so that she may not be startled, you see, and tell her this thing and that, and how it all happened, you see."

"Save us!" exclaimed the woman. "It will be the death of my young lady. Well, I will tell her that you must see her and speak with her. Go back to the kitchen, Bet; I will let the man out."

"Very good," said Bet, and went away with her candlestick, so that Mortaigne and his men had nothing more to fear on that side. Lottie went back to her mistress and gave her to understand that the skipper was the bearer of bad news, which might, perhaps, require her to make some change in her plans for the morrow; and that, at any rate, she was sure that the message he was charged with was of the greatest importance. Catharine, thus persuaded, hastily

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threw on a wrapper and dressing-gown, and then desired that the man should be brought to her.

"Where are you hidden, man?" said Lottie, when she returned to the hall. "It is so dark that I cannot see you."

"Here I am, my beauty," replied Vollenhove. "Well, and what does the young lady say?"

"She says I am to take you to her.—But what is the meaning of this?—You are not alone."

"This," said Gonser, as he instantly flung a handkerchief over her head to smother her outcries, and held a knife to her throat. "This means that if you move a hair's breadth, you are a dead creature."

Meanwhile Vollenhove, followed by Mortaigne and Feyt, hurried down the passage to the door of Catharine's chamber.

"Come in," said she, when he tapped; but, as no one obeyed and there was no

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noise, she went to the door and opened it.

"Where is my maid?" she asked a little surprised, for in front of her stood Vollenhove; but he, throwing his arm round her waist, passed her on to Mortaigne, who wrapped his cloak about her head, took her up in his arms, and with Feyt's help carried her to the front door.

"Open the door, gaby!" cried Gonser, who was holding the waiting-woman and could not stir, addressing Goldestede. The lad stood bewildered, but Vollenhove had rushed forward and opened the door, through which Mortaigne and Feyt now disappeared with their burthen. All this, however, had not taken place without some little noise, which brought Vrouw van Ruytenburgh with her daughter and the chamber-maid hurrying to the spot; the girl held the candle she had relighted in her hand.

"What is the matter?" asked the three terrified women as with one voice.

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"Here, take her!" said Gonser, flinging Lottie from him with some violence; the woman almost fell among the other three and the maid in her consternation dropped the light.

"Out of the way!" cried Gonser, dragging Goldestede out of the house. "Do you want to stay here to be hanged?"

And the pair, taking advantage of the women's dismay, fled down the street to where the chariot stood. Vollenhove had outstripped them all, and jumped into it, Mortaigne and Feyt came last, dragging on the poor girl, whom they handed in to Vollenhove.

"Mejuffer *," he said in her ear, in a perfectly civil but determined tone of voice: "I beg you will make no noise, for, if you do, I shall be compelled, for my own sake, to kill you."

Whether this warning had the desired

* Mademoiselle, Mistress.

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effect, or whether Catharine was too much bewildered to allow of her uttering a sound, she submitted to be placed in her seat without further resistance, and he, partly to protect her against the night-air, and partly that her undress-gown should not attract the notice of any one they might meet, wrapped her in the cloak he had left in the chaise and put his hat on her head. Before these arrangements were completed Gonser had sprung on the box by the side of the driver and ordered him to proceed down the Nieuwstaat.

"But," said Tyssen, who now began to perceive that this was no ordinary elopement, but a violent abduction, for which he, as an accomplice, might be called to account, "supposing I do not choose to abet you any further in this business?"

"Then I will send this bullet through your head and drive myself," said Gonser.

This was, in legal parlance, an "*argu-*

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ment peremptoire," to which Tyssen immediately succumbed. Laying his whip across the horses' backs, he turned down the Nieuwstraat, whither Mortaigne, Feyt and Goldestede had meanwhile hurried as fast as their legs could carry them.

"Drive on," cried Mortaigne to the coachman, "we shall soon overtake you."

In a few minutes he and the two men had reached the stable where Tyssen's boy was still holding the saddle-horses in readiness. But now there was a steed too many —the one intended for Spinel.

"Wait here for half an hour," said Mortaigne to the stable-lad, "and if by that time the gentleman who was to have mounted him is not here, lead him back to my stables.—And now forward!" he added, addressing the others. "Our lives depend on the pace we can make."

He set spurs to his horse and gallopped off, followed by the two men, after the

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chariot which they came up with at the Haarlem Ferry, then on they went across the drawbridge and along the Bezuidenhoutsche road.

Catharine had by this time recovered her wits, and though still under the influence of her companion's threat, she began to perceive that he aimed rather at the possession of her person than at her life, and that there was no hope of escape for her unless she cried for help from any one who might chance to be on the road. So she began to scream with all her might: "Murder!" "Help!" without heeding Vollenhove's threats, which now, as they were not fulfilled by deed, were beginning to lose their effect on her. Little good, however, did the luckless damsel get by her outcries. It was now ten o'clock, and by that hour, in those days, the highroads were as deserted as the streets in the town, excepting by nightbirds or by those whom necessity brought

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out of their dwellings. The rare passers-by who had met the chariot when it was still in the streets of the Hague had been content to stare at it, and two or three half-drunken loiterers returning town-wards from the *Green Alleys*, though they heard the girl's call for help did not care to be mixed up in an affair in which they would have to deal with armed men and must certainly get the worst of it. When they presently drove past that hostelry Catharine, happening to look out, felt sure that she saw the figure of the faithful Nicolas standing in the open door-way; and on this, loudly shouting his name, she tried to fling herself out of the chaise.

"Mejuffer," said Vollenhove, pulling her back, "my instructions are to treat you with every respect; but if you persist in shouting and screaming, I shall be obliged, to my great regret, to tie a handkerchief over your mouth."

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But this threat, too, was a vain one. When once a woman's nerves are in such a state of excitement as were now those of Catharine d'Orléans, she is as impervious to fear as to persuasion, and she went on just the same, defending herself with hands and feet, and giving Vollenhove work enough, since he, not to prejudice his master's prospects, would use no unnecessary force. He was by this time less uneasy than at first, for the party had got some little distance on their way; and had turned into the lane to Voorburg where, at this time of the night, there was very little chance of meeting any one; and he comforted himself with the reflection that a woman, though blessed with the stoutest lungs, cannot go on screaming for ever, so that by the time they reached Voorburg, she would be too tired to give tongue. Also she seemed at last to see how fruitless her efforts were; she sat silent, sunk in a heap, and then

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burst into a flood of tears, broken by loud sobs. Vollenhove let her give free vent to her passion, and it was not till she seemed somewhat calmer that he said, in the most insinuating tone of which he was master:

"Be easy, fair Mistress. No one has any evil designs against you. All of us who are about you here, have no purpose in view but to secure your future happiness."

"My happiness?" sobbed Catharine. "Whose concern is it? Who are you? I do not know you. And whose doing is all this?"

"I, for my part," said Vollenhove, "am no more than the servant of your most devoted adorer; and he merely awaits your permission to throw himself at your feet and assure you of his deep devotion."

"His devotion!" cried Catharine. "Is this the way he takes to show it? — But listen," she went on after a moment's silence

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while she recovered some spirit, "you are his servant, you say; I do not know whether your master is rich and can pay you handsomely for the shameful service you have done him. But I am very rich, and if you will give me the chance of escaping I will pay ten—nay, a hundred times as much as your master may have promised you for your assistance."

"Mejuffer," said Vollenhove with the utmost coolness, "I am not a man of money, but, on the contrary, a poor serving-man who is fain to obey his master's orders; I will readily confess that if I saw anything to be got by it, I would not refuse you my assistance out of sheer pity. There is but one difficulty in the way—a small one perhaps in your eyes, but in mine not to be gotten over: it is that your promise alone is not of the smallest value."

"What!" cried Catharine, "is not my word enough? Well, give me paper, and

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at the first place where we stop a minute, I will give you a bond in writing."

"It would be of no more use than so much waste-paper," replied Vollenhove as coolly as before, "unless it bore your guardian's sign-manual."

"Oh, my guardian will be only too thankful if you will but carry me back to him!" said Catharine. "He will be sure to confirm what I have promised. He will . . ."

"Hand me over to the authorities and see me safely bestowed in the Voorpoort," Vollenhove put in. "Or does your excellency think I do not know Councillor Rixen? Justice above all things, is the word with him and his colleagues. He would see me hanged, neither more nor less; and if he should first pay me what your generosity might promise, it would profit me nothing, for all I have would be confiscated by the state."

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"No, no; I should procure your pardon," said Catharine. "You would not be so sternly dealt with if you blotted out your first misdeed by your after-conduct. I implore you, good man, hear my entreaties, and let your heart be softened. It must by this time be known at the Hague that I have been carried off and some one will speedily be on our track. If you are caught in the fact, you certainly will not escape punishment, but if you help me with a good will, you have every chance of a reward."

How far the young lady's entreaties and agreements might have been fitted to touch the feelings or the understanding of her companion can never be known. At this moment it seemed as though the fate Catharine had pictured had actually overtaken him. The sound of hoofs became audible behind the chariot.

"They are after us, Jonker," said Feyt to Mortaigne.

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"Well then, we must ride the faster," replied Mortaigne. "Tyssen, lay on your whip!"

"How can I go any faster?" said the man. "Your excellency does not want to see the horses drop before we reach Voorburg."

Nevertheless he whipped them up; but the rider behind them also mended his pace, and presently the louder tramp of his steed betrayed that he was coming closer every minute and would soon overtake the party.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Mortaigne. "What have we to fear? There seems to be but one man in pursuit, and even if there were more, we are all armed. Hold your carbines ready, men; I will go back myself and see who dares to follow us."

As he spoke he turned his horse, and taking out his pistol, held it ready to meet the horseman who had already began to shout: "Hey! stop!"

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"Come no further," cried Mortaigne, "or I shoot you dead."

"That would be a blunder, your excellency," answered Spinel, for he it was whom they had taken for a foe in pursuit.

"Spinel!" exclaimed Mortaigne. "What the devil could I be thinking of to have forgotten you so completely. You are doubly welcome. I was beginning to fear that you had lost every chance of coming up with us."

"It is no thanks to Vollenhove that I am here," said Spinel. "A pretty errand he sent me! But let that pass. I got out of the scrape, and by good luck found the horse still waiting.—But it will not be long before the whole town is on the hue and cry."

"Do you think they will soon be at our heels?" asked Mortaigne.

"That I cannot say," replied Spinel. "But as I rode down the Kneuterdijk, I

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saw a crowd collected already on the Square and the watch turning out under arms."

"To relieve guard," said Mortaigne. "But they will not get to horse so fast, to ride after us; and then they will have no small difficulty in finding our traces.—But there is that precious outcry beginning again in the chaise. I thought myself lucky that the girl had quieted down."

In fact, Catharine, on hearing the commotion occasioned by Spinel's return, had, like Mortaigne himself, for a moment fancied that a rescue was at hand, and had set up her cries for help once more. But soon discovering her mistake she ceased shouting, and began to cry again. This went on till they arrived at Voorburg. They drove through the village, now sunk in sleep, where not a soul was to be seen, and then pursued their journey at a foot-pace, not to tire the horses. Mortaigne conceived that

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it was now time to show himself, so, desiring the driver to stop, he dismounted, made Vollenhove get out of the chaise, and took his seat while the valet took his master's horse.

I will not repeat the expressions by which Mortaigne, falling on his knees as well as circumstances permitted, and with clasped hands endeavoured to extenuate his criminal deed and persuade Catharine to pardon it. All I need say is that the damsel seemed to give not the slightest heed to his words, and vouchsafed him no reply. As soon as he had taken his seat by her side, and the sound of his voice, which she at once recognized, had confirmed her previous suspicions, she shrank into the corner of the chariot, turning away her head and covering her face with her hands without ceasing to sob and weep. It was not till after he had spent more than an hour in vain eloquence and had almost talked himself

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out, that she, though preserving the same attitude, began to bewail her situation in short, broken words, and then to load him with bitter reproaches which he, on his part, acknowledged that he had deserved, while he laid it all to the score of his love which had led him to so desperate a deed. However, his task, though still a hard one, was easier now that he had once got her to speak; and though he seemed to be as little in her good graces as ever, yet he succeeded in so far gaining her attention that she listened to him with more composure, and their conversation became more connected. This, no doubt, was partly brought about by her conviction that, as she was in his power, without any prospect of effectual help, idle outcries were perfectly useless; she began to think it wiser to preserve her self-command in the hope that an opportunity might offer of escape from the hands of her captor.

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But still the opening did not occur. In the course of the night they stopped indeed more than once to bait the horses; but it was always at some remote village-inn, where no one was to be seen but a sleepy stable-boy, roused from his bed before the break of day; and even with these Catharine could not exchange a word, for Mortaigne never asked her whether she would alight and she was too proud or too cautious to crave permission.

So on they went; leaving Leyden to the left, and by dawn had got as far as Alfen, where the chaise stopped in front of the village-inn on the upper Rijndijk with the *Arms of Utrecht* on the swinging sign-board.

"If you would like to rest for half an hour, and take some refreshment," said Mortaigne to Catharine, "I shall gladly give you the opportunity; but on one condition."

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"And what is that?" asked Catharine.

"That you pass for my wife in the eyes of the inn-wife, and that you make no complaint to any one."

"I am in your power," said Catharine, "and have no choice but to submit to your conditions."

"Come then," said he; and springing out from the chaise he offered Catharine first his hand to help her down, and then his arm to lead her into the inn. Here they were conducted by the maid into a sitting-room whither they were speedily followed by the mistress of the house, who had got out of bed at the news that worshipful company had alighted at her inn.

"Light a few faggots on the hearth," said Mortaigne. "It is a cold time of year for travelling by night, and I see that my wife is frozen."

And in point of fact Catharine was

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trembling and her teeth chattered, but less from cold than from the shivering fit which commonly ensues after any great excitement. A fire was soon kindled, and Mortaigne had some hot milk and bread brought for Catharine, while he drank a flask of Rhine wine. Hardly had they been sitting more than a few minutes by the hearth when Vollenhove knocked at the door and said he must immediately speak alone with his master.

"What is the matter now?" asked Mortaigne knitting his brows in wrath, unwilling to leave Catharine alone with the hostess; but Vollenhove's face was so grave that he perceived he must comply with the man's request.

"I must just speak with this fellow," he said to Catharine, "you remember your promise!"

With these words he left the room.

"Well, what is it?" he asked of Vollen-

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hove, as soon as they found themselves alone together.

"Just this," said the valet. "The driver has made his way into the stables with the chaise and horses, and has declared that he will go no further."

"That he will not?" cried Mortaigne, biting his lips. "Then he must be made to go by force."

"That was all very well," said Vollenhove, "so long as he sat on the coach-box within reach of Gonser's pistol. But now that he is free and in the stable with the horse-boy at hand, he talks big, and says he will go back."

"But it seems to me there are enough of us to compel him," said Mortaigne.

"Your excellency can use no force here, and make no display of fire-arms now that we are in a populous place," said the man shaking his head. "The peasants are already gone out to their work; the smith

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near by is blowing up his fire, and in the event of a struggle we should be the weaker party. I see nothing to be done but to give Tyssen his money and seek some other means of carrying the young lady further on the way."

"And have you found any?" asked Mortaigne.

"There is a small vehicle here in the coach-house," said Vollenhove, "which is not handsome, to be sure, but which may serve our turn; if we could find a pair of sturdy horses to pull it we should see our way again."

"Very good," said Mortaigne, "order everything as you judge best. I must go in again, for I dare not leave the girl any longer with the hostess."

With these words Mortaigne went back; but it would seem that he had already left the two women too long to their own devices. When he laid his hand on the latch

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of the door to open it, he found that it was bolted within. Catharine, in fact, as soon as she was relieved of his presence, had told her story to the mistress of the inn, had besought her protection, and bolted the door.

"Open the door!" cried Mortaigne banging at it violently. "Open it or I will batter it in."

But he got no reply, and the door stood firm against his efforts. In a rage he ran down-stairs and desired Feyt and Goldestede to come up with him at once with their carbines.

"Woman!" he shouted with all his might, "I command you for the last time: open the door or I will batter it down."

"For Heaven's sake, good woman," Catharine implored, throwing herself on her knees before the hostess who was doubting. "Do not listen to him; he is only trying to frighten you."

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"What is your answer?" cried Mortaigne from without. "Am I to use force to get at my wife? — Here, men, beat the door in with the stocks of your carbines that they may be convinced that I am in earnest."

Feyt and Goldestede obeyed and the terrified hostess, fearing that Mortaigne's threats would be put into execution, tore herself from Catharine who clung to her desperately, and unbarred the door.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Mortaigne going in. "And why is the husband locked out when his wife is within?"

"Your wife!" repeated Catharine, getting as far from him as possible. "You know full well that it is by force alone that you have got me into your power."

"What has she been telling you?" asked Mortaigne of the hostess. "A pack of nonsense! That she has been brought away against her will, no doubt, and such

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like. These two men, the others below stairs, can bear witness that we have been plighted to each other for more than a year. But she sometimes forgets this." And with a meaning look at the woman he pointed to his forehead, accompanying the gesture with a significant shrug.

"Poor thing!" said the hostess, casting a compassionate eye on Catharine. "So young and so . . ."

"What is the man trying to make you believe?" cried Catharine with a vehement burst. "That I am not in my right mind? Oh! in the name of all you hold dear, good woman, put no faith in his words. Who is it he appeals to? To his abettors who are even worse than himself. Oh, God! Is there no one to help a poor, forlorn creature! Send for the mayor, my good woman, and get him to enquire into the truth. I will endure the utmost punishment if I have deceived you."

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"But it strikes me, Sir," said the woman, "that what she asks is not unreasonable; and I should be glad to feel assured that you are her lawful husband."

"Then go and look in the register of the great church at the Hague," said Mortaigne. "What can your mayor do in the matter? Do you think that I carry my certificate of marriage in my valise, or that I have time to wait here till you have roused the man from his sleep and investigated the business? — Now, what next? — Is the conveyance nearly ready? — Go and find out," he added to Goldestede, "and tell them to make haste there!—And you," he went on in a whisper to Feyt, while he cast a side-glance at the chamber-maid who had run up at the sound of high words, "take good care that no one leaves the house."

The two men went off to obey his orders. Goldestede ran to the stable where

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the horses were being put in to the chaise, and Feyt posted himself outside the door, ready to dispute the right of exit with all comers.

The four persons in the upper room meanwhile preserved utter silence; Mortaigne with his arms folded, marched up and down the room, pausing now and then to pour himself out a glass of wine and swallow it hastily. Catharine had dropped into a chair and sat bitterly weeping; the hostess looked from one to the other, uncertain what to do; and the maid, who could make nothing of the matter, stood gaping open-mouthed in the doorway. This dumb drama lasted some little while, till Vollenhove brought word that all was ready for their start.

"Behave reasonably," Mortaigne then said in an under-tone to Catharine as he offered her his arm. "Let yourself be guided by me with a good grace, and do

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not force me to do anything I should afterwards be sorry for."

And with these words he flung a ducat on the table and compelled her, half by persuasion and half by force, to accompany him downstairs, the hostess gazing after them in speechless amazement.

"What ails the helpless thing?" asked the maid.

"Oh, Tina," said her mistress, "it is perhaps better not to enquire. God grant there is no evil deed behind; but I have never seen any good come of meddling with the concerns of great folks."

And with a deep sigh she picked up the piece of gold.

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CHAPTER VI.

Telling of the great service which Vollenhove rendered his master, and how the party arrived at Kuilenburg.

THE vehicle which was to serve them as a carriage was certainly quite unique of its kind. It was a little cart, not on wheels but on wooden rollers, covered with a leathern hood, and containing two seats, one in front of the other. In front of this elegant equipage, which awaited them on the upper dyke or gravelled roadway, were two horses, one before the other; and to show that there was no idea of their making any great speed, the driver was to walk by the side of the horses.

Catharine, still sobbing, allowed herself to be led to the spot and took her place on the front seat. Vollenhove seized this op-

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portunity of asking his master how he stood with the young lady.

"Alas!" said Mortaigne with a shrug, "I have not got much forwarder!"

"Then let me ride behind her," said Vollenhove, "and I am almost convinced that I can bring her to reason."

"Will you try?" asked Mortaigne. "I shall be greatly indebted to you, for I assure you I have exerted all my powers of persuasion."

"All the greater triumph for me if she yields to mine," said Vollenhove. "But—we must make some change in our arrangements. That splendid vehicle is so narrow and rickety that at the slighest obstacle in the way it is in danger of upsetting. Thus it is necessary that we should take it in turns to run behind to hold it up; and we will make this our Oldenburger's duty. Here, Goldestede, I have a job for you which is just suited to your powers."

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The machine was soon on its way. Feyt and Spinel as a vanguard on horseback, Mortaigne and Gonser behind; while Gonser led the horse hitherto ridden by Goldestede, who now walked holding on to the vehicle. Vollenhove had taken his place behind Catharine, and they had not gone far on their road when he thus began a conversation:

"You see, Mejuffer, that the Jonker no longer dares to trouble you with his company."

"I had not thought him so timorous," said Catharine sharply.

"Alas! Mistress," Vollenhove went on, "your excellency accuses him perhaps of barbarity and cruelty because he was forced in the inn to assume them. But consider how great the need was; and that, if he had acted otherwise, he must have lost the fruits of all his efforts and sacrifices. Truly if Mistress Catharine could read his heart

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she would be convinced that his sternness, his apparent obduracy were no more than a feint, and that he cherishes not merely passionate love for you, but the sincerest respect."

"And pretty proof he gives me of his respect!" retorted Catharine.

"I admit," said Vollenhove, "that the employment of cunning and force may be regarded as an insult; but he is as innocent of the one as of the other."

"Innocent!" exclaimed Catharine.

"Innocent," repeated Vollenhove. "In so far as that the guilt of such a deed attaches less to him, who only allowed it, and who hopes to gather its fruits, than to him who planned and executed it. Believe me, my master, who would shed the last drop of his blood rather than that you should suffer the smallest harm, would never have consented to carry you off if another man had not persuaded him to it by proving to

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him that if he persisted in his refusal to use such means, he must for ever renounce the hope of making you his. That other, without whom he would never have been induced to take such a step, and on whom therefore the whole weight of your anger should fall, is none else but — your most obedient servant."

"What!" cried Catharine, "and you are so barefaced as to proclaim it yourself?"

"What can I do, Mistress?" asked Vollenhove. "I saw that, for more than a year already, my good master had been pining for love of you — such a good, and noble Jonker, so brave, so loving and so worthy to be loved; and I saw that all his gaiety had deserted him, that he had become completely a victim to his irrepressible passion, was it strange that I, his faithful servant—nay, I may say his friend—and wholly devoted to him, for I have loved

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him from my earliest youth — should do everything in my power to save him from despair. I knew that it was your guardian's purpose to send you to Zealand; once there, I also knew, you would never have seen the Hague again, for once married . . ."

"What?" cried Catharine somewhat startled by these words, on which Vollenhove had intentionally laid no small emphasis.

"Nothing less than married," repeated the artful valet. "I know what I am saying. There is a certain young de Maureg-nault at Veere, to whom your guardian had promised your hand, and to whom, according to the purpose of Heer Rixen and Mevrouw Boreel, your excellency was to have been wed within three months."

"Monstrous nonsense!" exclaimed Catharine turning away.

"Not so monstrous as your excellency

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thinks," the man assured her. "We serving folk sometimes hear a great deal in the kitchen and buttery, of which the grand folks upstairs know nothing till it is too late. That Heer Rixen may have his reasons for favouring de Mauregnault your excellency may understand as well or better than I. That Mevrouw Boreel would gladly see you married to her nephew, as an arrangement highly advantageous to him, will not astonish you either; and that they therefor would fain carry you off to Middelburg is a fact which your excellency perhaps may still wish to doubt, though it is as certain and true as the faithful love my master bears to you."

"I do not believe a word of it," said Catharine, but in a tone of less conviction which betrayed that she was beginning to have her doubts; and at the same time young Mauregnault's face rose before her memory —an ill-made, red-haired, pale, dull fellow,

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to whose disadvantage a comparison could not fail to be between him and Mortaigne —a clever, well-built, attractive and intelligent man.

"Was it any wonder," Vollenhove went on, "that, when this plan came to my knowledge, I should use all my powers of persuasion to induce the Jonker to hinder its execution? At first he positively would not hear of such a thing—he would die rather than insult you. He did more. Withheld by an excess of bashfulness, he dared not, after being so often repelled, try to see you in the circles where he might have met you, much less call on you at your inn; so he went again and again to Heer Rixen . . ."

"To Heer Rixen!" exclaimed Catharine in amazement, for she had never heard of these visits — for the very sufficient reason that they had never taken place.

"To Heer Rixen," repeated Vollenhove,

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"to assure him of the honesty of his aims as regards your excellency, and to entreat him not to risk your happiness. He made no secret of his own circumstances, gave him the fullest information as to his own fortune, showed him the title-deeds of the estates he owns in Germany" — estates which, like the interviews with Rixen, existed only in the valet's fertile imagination— "and declared himself ready to wait till you should be of age so that the sincerity of his affection and the steadfastness of his nature might be put to the proof. But your respected guardian would hear not a word of all this; nay, would scarcely listen to him."

"It is all very strange," said Catharine, musing, and in spite of herself she listened with some interest to the falsehoods Vollenhove poured out as truth.

"What then could my poor master do?" resumed the artful fox, who did not

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fail to observe the impression he had made. "The letters he repeatedly addressed to you, in which he laid his case before you, were not even thought worthy of a reply . . ."

"I never received any letters from him," said Catharine.

"I suspected as much," said Vollenhove. "But Feyt, the lackey who is riding with us, can prove that he carefully, and with his own hand, delivered them to your waiting-woman."

"They never reached mine," Catharine repeated.

"So I suspected, as I said before; for they were sent back to the Jonker all together under one cover, and I cannot suppose that any one of such good breeding and gentle manners as yourself, Mistress, would treat a lover whose suit was by no means presumptuous in so rude a manner; and if I know the hand which had written

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the address, it was that of a clerk of the Court, and then all is clear. Your woman had been charged by your guardian to deliver any letters that might reach you into his hands, and Heer Rixen sent them back to my master, to make the Jonker believe that his addresses had been rejected by you with scorn. — So really, if a plot had been laid against you, it was not so much by my master as by those more near to you."

"But I cannot even now believe," said Catharine half to herself, "that my guardian would have acted thus."

"Was not such conduct," Vollenhove went on, apparently without heeding this remark, "was not such conduct calculated to make my master desperate? And when he was at last convinced that your friends would do their utmost to defeat his love for you and prevent his revealing to you all that he had at heart, what wonder that he at last followed my advice, so as to learn

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from your mouth what he had to hope or to fear?"

"And could he have found no other way of doing this than by carrying me off by force?" said Catharine.

"What other means were there?" asked Vollenhove. "How else might he speak with you in any place where you would be free from their hostile influence, free to listen to his proposals?"

"Do you call me free now?" retorted Catharine half bitterly, half smiling. "Is the situation in which you have placed me —a captive, and surrounded by armed men — to be regarded as freedom? Then you and your master must have strange notions of what constitutes freedom."

"Do not suppose, Mejuffer," Vollenhove went on, "that the Jonker could ever conceive the idea of keeping you in his power by force, or compelling you to marry him. No. As soon as we are in a place where

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he can speak with you undisturbed and in safety he will lay his fate in your hands; and if you then remain unmoved by his passion, he will leave you free to return to your friends. That was his firm determination from the first, and the only condition on which he allowed himself to accede to the plan of carrying you off. And how long he yet hesitated you may understand from the fact that he did not give his consent till the very last day, when he knew that he must otherwise give up all hope of ever seeing you again till you were married."

"But how could he imagine," cried Catharine, "that the employment of violence could ever be a means of conquering my inclinations?"

"As regards that violence, Mejuffer," Vollenhove replied, "I have already told you it was entirely my doing. Punish me for it; treat me with your utmost scorn; forbid me your presence for ever; hand me

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over to the arm of justice so that I atone for my audacity on the gallows.—I will submit to anything and everything if only you will take my good master into favour. If I have succeeded in striking a blow to secure his happiness I shall die content, with the happy consciousness of having done my duty as a faithful servant, and having paid the debt of gratitude I owe him since the day, two years ago, when he pulled me out of the depths of the Rhine and risked his own life to save mine."

And then, not so much from emotion at recalling a feat which had never taken place as to give a dramatic finish to his harangue, Vollenhove blew his nose and pretended to wipe away a few tears which were supposed to have rolled down his cheeks—a demonstration in which he could indulge with the better success because Catharine, sitting in front of him, could not see his face.

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"Mortaigne is not perhaps so bad as he was painted to me," thought Catharine. "A man who can inspire his servant with such an attachment must certainly have some characteristics which do him honour."

"Matters are prospering!" said Vollenhove to himself. "She is touched already. Now to strike the iron while it is hot."

And he forthwith began a flowing and striking description of his master's disposition and virtues, for Mortaigne, if his man was to be believed, had not his match on the face of the earth. Keeping within the bounds of probability he nevertheless varied his eulogium with allusions to the ancient family to which his master belonged and which, by his account, was allied with all the most illustrious, and even princely, houses; to the high esteem in which he was held at the German Courts, which had already procured him brilliant offers — now

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of a good marriage, or again of a high post in the army — all of which he had rejected in order to remain at the Hague in the vicinity of the object of his happiness; to the delightful situation of the country house in which he resided when he was in Germany, and whence there was a view of the loveliest property; to the annual income from the said estate which should suffice to make his master a rich man if only he were sterner in his dealings with the farmers, and would enable him wholly or partly to pay off his debts if he did suffer himself to be the loser by his kind-heartedness. In short, the famous Cat in Boots when he rode in the carriage with the king and the princess, did not show more ingenuity in enumerating the merits and wealth of the Marquis of Carrabas, than did our friend Vollenhove in his eulogium of Mortaigne.

Any one with a little more experience than Catharine would easily have seen

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through this tissue of invention and lies, but the poor child, ignorant as yet of the guiles and mockery of the world, found no ground for doubting what was told her with so much appearance of probability and truth by a man who began by accusing himself. Moreover, is there a woman who is not flattered by the assurance of being loved; and when the voice of good sense whispered to her that it was the possession of her wealth rather than of her person which had inflamed Mortaigne's desires, the voice of vanity cried louder, saying that a man who was himself so rich and of such good family could only love her for herself. To be sure the proofs he had given of his devotion could not be called delicate; still they were indisputable, and at any rate it could not be denied that Mortaigne had run infinite risk for her sake, even that of imprisonment and capital punishment — a thing which few lovers would have done in

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honour of their ladies. These considerations were reinforced by her wrath against her guardian for the way in which she supposed him to have treated Mortaigne, and by the hateful image of Mauregnault, to whom she had no doubt that they had meant to marry her. The result of all this was that she lent a more and more willing ear to all Vollenhove told her and that when, after a ride of four hours and a half, they halted at Woerden, though her face bore the traces of fatigue, agitation and uneasiness, it betrayed neither wrath nor fear.

"Well?" queried Mortaigne when Vollenhove, stepping out of the vehicle, came to join him.

"Well, Jonker," replied the valet, "I have half won the battle, and it now depends only on you to complete the conquest. But one thing I may impress on you: force and hard words will not help

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you to the desired end. If you wish to succeed, everything must depend on her favour."

Mortaigne went to the chaise, helped Catharine to alight, led her into a room in the inn, asked her whether she would now breakfast, and, when she replied in the affirmative, left the room and sent the daughter of the house to enquire whether she had any further orders. This behaviour, whence Catharine inferred that henceforth she was to be allowed some freedom, struck her as singular, and, as Vollenhove had rightly expected she let the girl go to and fro her room, bring her clean linen and serve her with breakfast, without uttering a single word of complaint as to her plight. Vollenhove allowed a quarter of an hour to elapse, and then, venturing once more into her presence, he asked her whether she would grant his master a hearing.

"What need has the Jonker to ask

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leave?" said Catharine. "I am still his prisoner."

"I have already told you, Madam," said Vollenhove with a bow, "that you need no longer regard yourself as such, and that the Jonker will not venture to present himself before your eyes till your excellency grants him permission, or, if I may say so, gives him the right."

"I will see him," said Catharine colouring.

Vollenhove bowed again and departed, and presently Mortaigne came in, who this time had put off all appearance of intending to use force and stood humbly in the doorway.

"Mejuffer," said he, "you see before you an unlucky sinner who awaits from your lips his sentence of life or death."

"Why have you placed me under compulsion to pronounce such a sentence?" asked Catharine.

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"Alas," said Mortaigne, falling on one knee without approaching her any nearer, and bending his head low, "if repentance could blot out my misdeed and undo that which is done, how truly would I thank Heaven! For alas! I see only too plainly, my crime has gained me nothing, and though it has procured me for a time power over your person, it has given me none over your heart."

"And did you seriously believe that you would gain it by such means?" asked Catharine.

"Of what use is it," said Mortaigne in a tone of deep dejection, "to declare once more my conviction that I deceived myself? Enough — you are free, Madam; and you can return to your friends, or let them know where to find you. My servants will obey your orders as soon as you vouchsafe to express them."

"Your conduct is noble," said Catha-

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rine, "but I beg of you to stand up. Your attitude is unworthy of you and of me."

"Alas!" said Mortaigne sighing deeply, "how can I stand up so long as I am crushed by the weight of your just displeasure."

"I could not but be angry," replied Catharine. "But I forgive you, as beseems a Christian woman."

"Thank you," said Mortaigne. "And yet your forgiveness, however welcome as lifting a burthen from my heart, cannot avail to change my resolution to await my doom here on my knees."

"What do you mean?" asked Catharine in surprise.

"I have carried you off against your will," Mortaigne went on. "I have committed the crime of abduction and am liable to the punishment of death. Justice has certainly sent forth her blood-hounds on my track, and ere long they must be

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here. Even if I evade them it will profit me little, for any neighbouring state would be eager to purchase the friendship of the Republic by surrendering my person. Then what better can I do, now that life has no longer any value in my eyes, than wait quietly here till the minions of the law come to seize me?"

"But I have granted you my forgiveness," said Catharine, "and if you now escape, my promise will have such weight with my uncle that he will stay all proceedings."

"Ah, Mejuffer," said Mortaigne, with a melancholy shake of the head, "you know not Justice, nor those who act in its name. The charge against me has by this time been laid, and a warrant issued for my apprehension; and when once the law has taken a matter in hand there is no escape possible, for love nor money. Believe me, nothing can paralyze or stay the strong arm

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which threatens me and no alternative is left me but to await with resignation whatever may be my doom."

"I cannot understand such a desperate conclusion," said Catharine, somewhat moved. "And what doom do you imagine will be pronounced on you?"

"Death," replied Mortaigne in a gloomy voice. "Death to me and all my fellow-criminals."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Catharine. "And would my pardon not avail to protect you against punishment?"

"You could protect me, not merely from punishment, but even from pursuit," said Mortaigne, "you, and you alone."

"I! and by what means?"

"Of what use would it be to tell you," replied Mortaigne, "when I know beforehand that you will never consent."

"Speak!" cried Catharine anxiously. "Anything that is not against my duty I

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will do to hinder so cruel a sequel to this fatal deed."

"And need I tell you that any proceedings that could be taken against me for having carried you off would fall through if you would consent to give me your hand?. . . ."

"Impossible!" said Catharine in a faint voice. "I should then for ever appear before the world as though I had gone with you of my own free will."

"I should expect nothing less," said Mortaigne, and his features expressed the deepest concern. "And ah! What most grieves me is that the world, which is always inclined to see matters in the worst light, will probably never under any circumstances believe that the abduction took place against your will."

"Can men be so malignant!" cried Catharine, bursting into tears at the thought. "I am indeed unfortunate!" she added, "and by your fault."

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"Oh, might I undo the cause of these tears at the cost of my own blood!" cried Mortaigne, seeing that the moment had come for changing his tactics; and rising suddenly he went up to Catharine, took her hand which she neither gave him nor withdrew, and covered it with kisses. Then once more dropping on his knees, but this time close by her chair, and throwing one arm round her waist, he renewed his professions of love, pictured to her what must await her if she were to return to her uncle, misunderstood and suspected by every one, and compelled to spend the rest of her days in single solitude or wedded to a husband unworthy of her. Then, in contrast to this prospect, he painted the smiling future which should be her lot if she would but listen to his suit; how in Germany, with him, rich, respected and admired, and worshipped by her husband, she might lead the happiest life herself, and make him the hap-

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piest mortal on earth. And although the trembling damsel made no reply, Mortaigne perceived that she no longer felt that horror of him which he had experienced at Alfen, and this gave him éloquence.

As to Catharine, she saw no chance of urging anything against the torrent of argument with which Mortaigne supported his suit; she was tired and worn out and not in a state to think clearly, and although she was not yet minded to agree wholly to all he demanded, she let herself be persuaded to promise that she would take the matter into serious consideration, and, meanwhile, proceed with him to a place where he would be more secure against pursuit.

"Victory!" cried Mortaigne, hurrying down again to Vollenhove, who, with his other fellows, had done justice to a substantial breakfast. "The lady is ours.

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Now, there is not a minute to lose; we must ride forward before she changes her mind."

They obeyed forthwith, and in less than ten minutes they were on their way again, leaving Woerden in the same order as before; with the difference that Catharine now sat alone in the little vehicle, or rather lay on some cushions which Vollenhove had borrowed from the inn. "Leave her now to reflect and sleep," he said to his master. "The more she is convinced that she is free to act, the readier will she be to submit to your wishes."

And in fact, they earned the reward of leaving Catharine for some time to herself. She already began to look on Mortaigne with a more kindly eye; she thought it a great pity that so handsome and brave a gentleman should die on the scaffold; in so far as it depended on her it should never happen, and she began even to reflect that

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he had committed no such very great crime when he had let himself be betrayed to such excesses by love.

Amid these cogitations deep sleep fell upon her, from which she had not awoke even when they had passed Utrecht and found themselves on the shore of the river. Here they got into the river-barge, and were carried across to Vianen where Mortaigne hired a boat into which he stept with Catharine, Vollenhove, Feyt and Goldestede; then when they had put off from the shore and the sail was hoisted to carry them up to the Leck, some of them said how, on the other side, by the ferry at Vreeswijk two horsemen had been seen gazing at them suspiciously, and then, giving the horses their head, had ridden off again towards Utrecht.

The wind filled the sail and the soft motion of the water was not unwelcome after the long and fatiguing ride. As they

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had to make their way up stream it was some little time before they reached Kuilenburg, which Mortaigne had chosen as the goal of his journey. It was about two in the afternoon when the boat came to a stand-still there, and our travellers entered the Ferry-inn where Spinel and Gonser awaited them, having ridden along the shore leading the other horses.

CHAPTER VII.

Explaining the reason why Mortaigne was led by preference to Kuilenburg, and how he was received there.

THE town of Kuilenburg, albeit a dependency of Holland, over which indeed, as will be shown in due season, Gelderland asserted the right of jurisdiction, was an independent fief, with a lord of its own

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and special forms of legal procedure. No wonder then that, like Buren, Leerdam, Vianen, Breda and other places which had independent rulers, it was known as a city of refuge whither bankrupts and the like, whose affairs were in bad order, or who had differences with the law, repaired to find protection against its pursuit. This had indeed already given rise to complaints, and the States of Holland had repeatedly warned the Count of Kuilenburg, as their vassal, to withhold his protection from such folks as these; but hitherto this injunction had met with no more than a formal recognition. For this reason Mortaigne had conceived that he might chose Kuilenburg as his first resting-place for some little time, and he had friends in the town who, as he hoped and expected, would not leave him in the lurch. At the same time he did not think it advisable to carry the abducted damsel into the town; not so much from

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any fear that the dressing-gown which she still wore should attract notice, as that he desired first to assure himself of a good reception. He therefore wrote a few lines to his friend Chavallerie whom I have already mentioned in a former chapter as a gentleman about the person of the Count of Kuilenburg, and sent Spinel into the town with the letter.

The fief of Kuilenburg had, not long since, after the battle of Pallandt been conceded to Henrich Walraet, Count of Waldeck-Pyrmont, who, in the course of the past year, and in an evil hour, had come to visit this his new possession.

The count was sitting soon after dinner — it was Tuesday, the 18th of March — in one of the rooms in his palace, and enjoying a refreshing nap, when he was roused by the unexpected entrance of his gentleman in waiting.

"What now, Chavallerie!" cried he,

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somewhat ill-pleased at this intrusion, "what is the matter?"

"An affair which requires haste," replied Chavallerie, "or I should not have presumed so greatly as to trouble your highness at so inopportune a moment. I have this instant received news from a friend of mine, one Mortaigne, a noble gentleman whose family must be well known to your excellency, that he is now at the Ferry-house, and desires the favour of a safe-conduct to allow him to enter the city."

"A safe-conduct?" repeated the count. "What need has he of that? Is our good town of Kuilenburg ever closed against any traveller of rank?"

"Aye, but . . ." said Chavallerie with a doubting face, "for there is a but.—This Mortaigne has a lady with him, and . . ."

"Then will he be all the more welcome,"

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exclaimed Waldeck. "We have no ladies of good family in these parts and her society will be a godsend for our social evenings."

"I hope so," said Chavallerie. "But here a difficulty presents itself; my friend Mortaigne not merely desires a safe-conduct, but also craves your excellency's protection."

"My protection! I hope that he is not guilty of manslaughter or any such crime."

"Not that. But he has carried off his young wife, who, as he writes me, was to be forced by her relatives into a marriage against her inclinations, and brought her hither from the Hague."

"An abduction!" exclaimed the count and he knit his brows. "That is a very grave matter. The gentlemen at the Hague might take it amiss if I were to interfere in such a business."

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'Bah!" said Chavallerie. "Since they are married . . ."

"But are you quite sure of that?" the count interposed.

"I was not present at the ceremony," said Chavallerie with a shrug, "but that can be ascertained."

"And we will ascertain it," said Waldeck. "Go and desire our mayor to proceed with his clerk to the Ferry-house to cross-examine the young people, and forthwith to report the result to me."

Chavallerie bowed and went at once to seek the two officials, who presently accompanied Spinel to the Ferry-house. Meester Joris Martensz who combined the dignity of mayor with the functions of a musician, surgeon, accoucheur and apothecary, was a short, stout, burly little man, with a red face, not a little conscious of the importance and consequence he derived from these offices. His secretary, who was like-

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wise the schoolmaster and choir-leader, was in appearance the greatest contrast; tall, lean and starved in person, pale and consumptive-looking.

This pair were led by the hostess of the Ferry-house to the room where Mortaigne and Catharine were sitting, and Meester Joris Martensz seated himself at the table while his clerk, having produced a sheet of paper and a portable ink-bottle, prepared to draw up a formal report of the enquiry.

"Are you the individual," the mayor began, settling his spectacles on his nose and fixing his little eyes, almost buried in his puffy cheeks, on Mortaigne, "are you the individual who requested a safe-conduct from his excellency, my lord the Count of Kuilenburg?"

"I myself," replied Mortaigne, "and the sooner it is vouchsafed to me the more satisfactory will it be to my wife and me, for we are tired out with our journey."

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"Hm—hah!" said the official. "But all in good order; *ordine procedamus.*—Your name is . . . ?"

"Johan Diederick de Mortaigne."

"You hear?" asked Martensz of his secretary.

"If my lord would be so good as to spell the name . . ." said the clerk, who spoke through his nose.

"With pleasure," replied Mortaigne, controlling his impatience with some difficulty; and he did as he was requested.

"Your calling?" asked the mayor.

"Gentleman," said Mortaigne with a shrug.

"Hm — hah!" observed Martensz. "Gentleman! And not at all a bad calling if a man has but enough bright coin to hold his own in the world; otherwise — but that is beside the matter.—So you are a nobleman, *vir nobilis;* you have that down, I hope, Hillebrands? And the

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young lady there — is she your lawful wife?"

"That she is," replied Mortaigne.

"With your permission," said the mayor, *certam scientiam requiro*, I must learn from the lady's own lips what the state of affairs may be. I ask you therefore, fair mistress, to tell me whether this man calling himself — what was he said? — Compagne—no, Montagne . . ."

"Mortaigne," corrected the clerk.

"Just so.—If you and this Mortaigne are joined together in lawful matrimony?"

It was not without anxiety that Mortaigne and Vollenhove awaited the answer, and they drew a deep breath of relief when Catharine said, in a low but audible voice: "We are."

"So far all is well," observed Meester Martensz. "Note the young lady's answer, Hillebrands. — But have you any proof or evidence of this allegation?"

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"No other than our declaration," replied Mortaigne.

"And my testimony," Vollenhove hastened to put in, "for I was present at the marriage ceremony."

"I did not address you, young man," said the official drawing himself up with much dignity. "Still, since you were *testis* or witness of this affair I will admit your evidence *in quantum pro;* but"—and here he turned to Mortaigne again—"I have been told of a certain *raptum* or abduction committed on the person of this lady."

"It is true," said Mortaigne, "that she was compelled to quit her home privily and fly with me, because her relations wanted to force her to a marriage against her will."

"Indeed!" said the mayor. "But she was still, it would seem, *sub regimine tutoris*, under the control of her guardian; and in such a case . . ." and he shook his head ominously.

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"How could she still be under the control of her guardian?" asked Mortaigne. "I have too much respect for your legal learning to suppose that you are not aware that, by marriage, a woman under age transfers the governance of her person and property from her guardian to her husband."

"*Recte*," replied Martensz, evidently soothed by this appeal to his learning. The *conjux* or husband assumes the rights of the *tutor* or guardian. I believe that we may regard ourselves as fully satisfied, Hillebrands, and may report favourably to my lord the count."

"So I flatter myself, and anxiously await instructions from the Hague," said Mortaigne, who now hoped that the visitation had ended with this examination. But in this he had miscalculated, for Martensz who had risen, went up to Catharine and looked at her seriously.

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"I beg of you," he began again after a short silence, "to allow me to forget for a few moments my official position as mayor of the province of Kuilenburg and to ask you as *Doctor medicinæ* if you are not suffering from a certain *agitatio febrilis* or feverish disturbance?"

"It seems to me," said Mortaigne, "that it is not to be wondered at, after so sudden a separation from her former surroundings and a journey of sixteen hours, night and day."

"You should certainly find quarters at once at the *Golden Lion*," the doctor went on, as he took Catharine's hand and felt her pulse. "Permit me to send you a calming potion which I am convinced will do you good. Also strongly I recommend the exhibition of a foot-bath with *sinapis* or mustard, and to-morrow I hope to come and enquire as to the *effectus* or results of the said remedies."

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With these words the important little man bowed to the company and withdrew, followed by his clerk and by Spinel who was to fetch the safe-conduct.

He returned more quickly than Mortaigne had dared to hope, with a coach, and the tidings that he had ordered rooms at the *Golden Lion* and that, although the pass could not yet be made out, the young couple were nevertheless to be allowed provisionally to enter the town.

Hereupon Mortaigne, Catharine and Vollenhove got into the vehicle, while Spinel and Feyt followed on foot; Gonser and Goldestede were to remain with the horses at the Ferry-house.

At the inn Mortaigne found Chavallerie, who was waiting for him and who forthwith invited him and his wife to spend the evening at the count's palace.

"I shall gratefully avail myself of his highness's politeness," said Mortaigne, who

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fully understood that the proposed favour must not be neglected; "but I hope that my lord the count will excuse my wife, as she is still exhausted by her journey and needs rest."

Chavallerie did not venture to press him further, but promised to wait for Mortaigne, who, after seeing that a suitable room had been arranged for Catharine, took a bath and changed his dress, and then rejoined his friend with whom he made his way to the château.

"Do you know, Mortaigne," said Chavallerie as they walked on together, "I do not believe one jot or tittle of this story of your marriage."

"Do not believe it?" said Mortaigne. "Well, I know no way to cure you of your unbelief."

"Is not this the same damsel," asked Chavallerie, "whom you were paying court to last year when I was at the Hague?"

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"The very same," replied Mortaigne. "And that reminds me of a wager we laid, and which you must now agree that you have lost.—One hundred crowns which I may claim from you, and which will be very acceptable for travelling expenses."

"Pooh!" cried Chavallerie, "it ill-beseems you, now that you are master of the rich heiress, and consequently of her wealth, to try to plunder a poor devil. Money is a thing which we, in the pleasant town of Kuilenburg greatly lack; but you may rely on my help and support, and for the next few days you may perhaps need them more than hard coin."

"I do not refuse the offer at any rate," said Mortaigne. "But you are greatly mistaken if you think that I have at present any control over the riches of this maid of Orleans. You were nearer the truth in your first conjectures than you are now. I will not conceal from you that I am not yet mar-

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ried, and you must advise me how to act that I may gather the fruit of my enterprise."

And he proceeded to give Chavallerie a brief account of all which the reader has been told. Although not too precise on the point of right and wrong, Chavallerie nevertheless could not approve of Mortaigne's conduct, nor could he conceal his fears that the abduction of the lady would lead to no good end.

"May be," said Mortaigne, "that I have dared too much and in vain. Still, as the girl has consented to her fate, and agreed to the marriage I flatter myself that all will turn out for the best if only we are really married as soon as possible; and so to-morrow morning we will go to the parson, the earlier the better."

"But you forget," observed Chavallerie, "that you have given out that you are already married, and that no marriage can be solemnized twice."

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"But I will explain to him that no marriage has as yet taken place between us."

"Then you will have Master Martensz to deal with," Chavallerie went on, "for he, in his report, has recorded the contrary statement, and you risk being put into prison. I fear you will have to postpone that marriage till you are beyond the frontier, and to that end you must remain here no longer than necessary."

"Do you really think that the count would have me imprisoned?" asked Mortaigne, somewhat discouraged by his friend's view of the case.

"Not of his own accord," replied Chavallerie, "but his factotum is more particular, and greatly afraid lest his excellency should burn his fingers by taking too great an interest in your concerns. It is indeed by his advice that the count has determined not to send you the safe-con-

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duct, which you otherwise would have had, till further enquiries had been made,"

"Must I then not count on his excellency's protection in the event of the States demanding my person?" asked Mortaigne somewhat crestfallen.

"Listen," said his friend. "Henry of Waldeck is not malicious; but he has two weaknesses which are commonly found in men of narrow intellect; he is headstrong in all he does and hard to dissuade from anything he has resolved on, and yet he can be led by the nose by any one who knows his weak side. The point is rather to be careful not to urge on him anything you may desire of him, but to contrive that it should seem to have originated in his own brain. At this moment he is under the influence of our cautious mayor; but if you succeed in convincing him that his honour and position make it incumbent on him to extend his protection to you, your

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cause is won. So try, this evening, to make a display of all your gifts; tell all your good stories, and take care that the count is amused, and prejudiced in your favour. If that is the case, then ask his permission to come to him to-morrow with a request for a safe-conduct which you will take care to have signed for yourself and the lady. If once you have made a favourable impression I am convinced that he will not withdraw his protection if all the troops of the States are at the gates.—But here we are at the Castle-bridge: bear in mind what I have told you and it will serve you in good stead."

And Mortaigne did in fact strive his utmost to follow his friend's advice, and his efforts had all the success Chavallerie had promised. The count showed himself highly pleased with his guest, and expressed his hope of seeing him again at the palace. On taking leave Mortaigne

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requested the audience he desired for the following morning and then, after more than four and twenty hours of excitement and anxiety, returned to his inn, not a little fatigued.

We will take leave of him for the present at the door, as did Chavallerie, and return to the Hague to see the effects his proceedings had produced there.

CHAPTER VIII.

Which sets forth how the abduction of Catharine d'Orléans was regarded by her relations, and more particularly how Jan van Ruytenburgh and Nicolas the coachman succeeded in coming on the traces of the fugitives, and what happened to the former at Kuilenburg.

WE left Jan van Ruytenburgh in the beer-house on the Spui at the moment when Spinel had just quitted it. It was

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some little time before the worthy host of the *Arms of France* fully understood that he had been the victim of a hoax, and even then it was not clear to him to what end it had been played upon him. Finally, after dismissing his man on the spot, and forbidding him ever to set foot in his house again, he returned home; but as he came near the Ruitenhof an unwonted crowd and bustle made him aware that something out of the common must have happened. Nor was his uncertainty of long duration, for when on reaching the spot he saw the watch in front of his own door, and his wife, his serving-wench, and the young lady's waiting-woman standing on the stoop, all three in eager talk interrupted by sobs, to a throng of watchmen and neighbours who had gathered round them.

His spouse was not a little comforted on seeing him return. She had rightly

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ascribed his absence, so closely followed by the disappearance of the serving-man and of Nicolas, to a premeditated plot, and she was afraid lest perhaps he had been killed outright, or got out of the way by some foul means. Reassured on this point she began to relate all that had occurred; though, as may be imagined, she could not tell the tale without being interrupted at every other word by the maid and waiting-woman, who put in whatever she forgot to mention with a more exact description of what my hero looked like, and by the good-wives who from time to time added a running accompaniment of exclamations, all of which did not contribute to its lucidity. The worthy innkeeper understood, however, that Catharine d'Orléans had been carried off by some unknown persons, and at the same time he heard that Heer Rixen had been sent for.

They were still arguing the matter,

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while the throng constantly increased, when Nicolas came pushing his way through them. He had been to the *Green Alleys*, but had found no sign or trace of his wife, and now came back in no small fury at the trick which some one had dared to play him, swearing to himself as he came along by all that was sacred that he would cut off Goldestede's ears wherever he might come across him. But how great was his amazement when he learnt what had taken place in his absence. He immediately remembered the chaise and the horsemen who had galloped past the *Green Alleys* at the moment when he came out on the road.

"Yes, it was she!" he cried, striking his forehead with his clenched fist. "I was not mistaken when I fancied I heard a voice calling out my name! Threefold ass that I was, not to rush at the chaise at once and stop it!—And how could you let

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such a thing happen," he went on, turning furiously on Ruytenburgh, "as that she should be carried off from your house?"

"How could I do anything to prevent it?" replied the innkeeper. "I was decoyed out by fine speeches just as you were."

"You ought not to have left the house," said Nicolas, "and I shall lay it to your charge if she does not come back."

While they were all thus squabbling Councillor Rixen appeared on the scene, not a little alarmed at the tidings which had reached him. His presence put an end to the war of words, and had the result that the meeting assembled on the stoop was transferred within doors, and held in a more regular form. Before long they were joined by the Fiscal, Magister Willem van Stryen, to whom Rixen had sent on first hearing the disastrous news. The two magistrates now examined not only the household, but

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the nearer neighbours, and the night watch; from these last they learnt that in the course of the evening there had certainly been some stir at Tyssen's coach-house, in the Nieuwstraat, and they sent immediately to secure the stable-lad and have him brought for examination to the *Arms of France*. By the help of his deposition they came to more precise knowledge as to how the abduction had been effected, and the coachman's idea that Catharine had been in the chariot which drove past him was fully confirmed. Also that Mortaigne was the chief of the party; and this was further proved by the evidence of a servant who, having been sent to his rooms, had heard from the landlord that his lodger had paid him that afternoon and gone off, bag and baggage.

But it was not enough to know by whom and in what manner the deed had been done; steps must also be taken to

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pursue the fugitives. Ruytenburgh and Nicolas both offered their services for this task, both equally prompted by their desire to blot out the blame which might attach to them for allowing a young lady to be carried off who had been entrusted to their care.

After brief consultation Rixen and the Fiscal accepted their services, and it was decided that the innkeeper and Nicolas should do their best to track the robbers, while at the same time a letter should be given them, signed by both the magistrates, whereby all civil and military authorities were requested to lend them succour against the criminal and his accomplices. And finally, the Fiscal desired that he might be immediately informed as soon as the runaways were overtaken, or their place of refuge discovered.

When all this was settled, and Ruytenburgh and Nicolas had provided themselves

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with the necessary preservatives against cold and accident, as well as with firearms, they mounted two stout nags belonging to the innkeeper — to whom his wife gave many prudent injunctions to be cautious — and rode out of the town. The great difficulty now was to know which way the party had gone; one thing, at any rate, was certain: they had set out by the Bezuidenhoutsch road. The darkness hindered them from seeing any track, but Ruytenburgh, for greater safety, had brought with him a lantern, and by its light they were able to discern at the corner of the lane that the chaise had turned off there from the high-road. On reaching Voorburg the paved street through the village showed no tracks, but on turning to the left, as soon as they came out on the highway again, they found the print of hoofs in the sand and so knew that they were on the track once more. Thus they

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rode forward, enquiring at every inn or tavern whether a party of horsemen with a chaise had stopped there, a question which was rarely answered in the affirmative.

To Ruytenburgh and Nicolas both, it was beyond a doubt that the fugitives had not taken the road to Haarlem, since they would have made no unnecessary circuit. Nor was it credible that they would venture into a thickly populated town. It was more probable that they had reached the frontier beyond Utrecht or Gelderland, and thither there was no road but along the Rhine. This, then, was the way taken by our two horsemen, who by daybreak had reached Alfen.

Here they were confirmed in their supposition as soon as they drew up at the *Arms of Utrecht*, and there not only found the chaise which had served for the abduction, but heard from Tyssen — whom

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they roused rather roughly from the slumber he had allowed himself—and from the inn-wife, the particulars of the Mortaigne's orders and of his behaviour at this place. As may be supposed, the driver and the hostess got a good many hard words and curses for their pains; the man for having provided the means for so disgraceful a deed; the woman for not having given the poor young lady more effectual assistance.

They soon had remounted and resumed their journey; at Woerden they got further news of the runaways, and without waiting there any longer than was absolutely necessary, they followed up the chace with such speed, taking advantage of all the information they could pick up by the way, that they reached the ferry across the Leck at the very moment when Mortaigne was putting off from the opposite bank with Catharine and certain of his followers. Leaving

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their horses at the Ferry-house Ruytenburgh and Nicolas were pulled up and across to Vianen, and learned at the Ferry-house there that the stranger had engaged a sailing-boat to carry him and his party to Kuilenburg.

Nicolas was now minded to proceed at once to that town, and if they had gone on they probably would have arrived in time to hinder Mortaigne from being allowed to pass in. But Ruytenburgh thought it advisable to go first to the magistrates of Vianen. Having found the mayor they laid the matter before him, whereupon he gave them to understand, that in his judgment it would be sheer folly to proceed to Kuilenburg without a sufficient escort; for that the count would no doubt extend to the miscreants such protection as evil-doers and vagabonds commonly enjoyed with him, and would not listen to Ruytenburgh and the coachman, no, nor even admit them

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to his presence. The mayor's view of the matter, however, was less the outcome of conviction on his part than of the rivalry and envy which existed between Vianen and Kuilenburg. For Vianen being an appanage of the Counts of Brederode laid claim, like Kuilenburg, to the privileges of a free town; and bankrupts and the like found reception there, a fact which had given rise to bitter jealousy between the two neighbouring communities.

The mayor ended his discourse by advising that either Ruytenburgh or Nicolas should return to the Hague and report the result of their expedition, while the other should go to Utrecht and demand the necessary assistance of some soldiers, without which — so this worthy opined — Henry of Valdeck could not be brought to terms.

Although ill-pleased by this counsel, which involved the loss of a day, at any rate, and perhaps of a night too — a loss of

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time which, as the high commissioner subsequently pointed out, was of paramount importance in such a case—Ruytenburgh and his companion finally decided on following it. They returned to the Utrecht shore, remounted their horses, and started for the city of Utrecht where they applied forthwith to a member of the States parliament who had formerly lodged at the *Arms of France*, and who was known to Ruytenburgh. This personage gave them to understand that he would talk over the matter with certain of his colleagues, and made no doubt that the required support would be given them; but thought that nothing could be done in the matter before the next morning; and he also considered it advisable that Nicolas should meanwhile return to the Hague to report the progress of affairs. The coachman, whose horse was too much tired to make the return-journey,

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therefore took the mail-coach which was on the point of starting.

That very evening a meeting of States deputies was held at Utrecht at which Ruytenburgh's petition was discussed, and it was agreed that he should be granted a small mounted force to accompany him to Kuilenburg and give weight to his demands. Meanwhile the States retained the letter which the Fiscal had given to Rixen and Ruytenburgh. This they deemed needful, inasmuch as the said letter had to serve as an official document to justify the help they had granted; but it did not occur to them that Ruytenburgh was thus deprived of the only evidence which would have given especial force to his application.

It was at about one after noon on the following day — a Wednesday — that a servant came to the Count of Kuilenburg, who was sitting at table with certain noble-

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men, and among them Chavallerie, to announce that a man, by name Jan van Ruytenburgh, had just come to town with half a dozen mounted men-at-arms, desiring to speak with his excellency of an important business.

"Men-at-arms!" exclaimed Waldeck in great wrath. "And how long has the town of Utrecht assumed the right of sending troopers into my town without my leave? Or am I no longer master in Kuilenburg?"

Chavallerie, who could easily guess what had brought the party thither, and who was rejoiced for Mortaigne's sake at the impression made on the count by the action of the authorities at Utrecht, at once replied:

"It certainly ill-accords with the respect due to your excellency as Count of Kuilenburg and as one of a family of princes. But that is the way of these citizens and

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boors; since they overthrew their king, and took to playing lords and masters, they have lost all respect for everything that is noble."

"It concerns that affair of your friend Mortaigne," said the count sourly.

"Not unlikely," said Chavallerie. "But I cannot understand what the gentlemen of the States have to do with it."

"It seems to me," said the count's seneschal, who was one of the company, "that it is at any rate worth the pains of enquiring into the matter. Your excellency has already granted this Mortaigne a safe-conduct—against my judgment; and I hope with all my heart that your condescension may lead to no mischief."

"It was not condescension but justice," said the count angrily, "for Mortaigne is of noble birth; he had satisfied me that he is lawfully married, and he had craved my protection which I purpose to grant him."

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"By your excellency's leave," the seneschal went on, perceiving the wiser part for him was not to interfere on the matter in question, "may I at least go and learn what this Ruytenburgh and his troopers want?"

"It is not necessary," replied the count. "We will ourselves give the man a hearing. Meanwhile there can be no such great hurry but that we may allow ourselves to finish our meal in peace. Desire him to wait in the adjoining room.—Chavallerie, pass me that Rudesheimer once more."

Henry of Waldeck was a lover of good eating and drinking, and not easily moved from the table; but to-day he seemed to have settled down to the business of making the meal last as long as possible, and addressed himself more often than usual to the wine-flask. Everything the seneschal could devise in the hope of inducing him

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to investigate forthwith what the message from Utrecht might be, only seemed to confirm the count in his determination to stay where he was. It was not till the lapse of some hours that he rose from table, with a heated brain and heavy legs, and went to the drawing-room where, by his orders, Ruytenburgh was now shown into his presence.

"What brings you here, and what is your errand?" he asked in a stern voice, as soon as our friend stood before him.

"I have come, by your leave," replied Ruytenburgh, "to lay a complaint before your highness against one Mortaigne, who has carried off a young lady of noble family out of my house . . ."

"What family, and what house?" Waldeck put in. "What are you talking about, fellow? and who are you?"

"I am Jan van Ruytenburgh, by your excellency's leave," was the reply, "Keeper

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of the *Arms of France* Inn at the Hague."

"Indeed! And what have we to do with your complaint?" asked Waldeck.

"A great deal," replied Ruytenburgh, who being accustomed to confront people of every degree, was not to be diverted from his point by a stern face or severe tone. "Mortaigne, as your excellency shall hear, has carried off a young lady by force from my inn, and with the help of a party of rascals has brought her hither, to Kuilenburg, where, as I am informed, he has her in keeping at the *Golden Lion*."

"This last fact has come to our knowledge," said the count, "and now what do you require?"

"Nothing less," replied Ruytenburgh, "than that your excellency should deliver up the robber and his accomplices to me, to be conducted from here, and that the young lady may be set at liberty."

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"Are you the representative of justice?" asked the count.

"As your excellency has been informed, I am the inn-keeper of the . , . "

"The *Arms of France*," Waldeck put in. "Yes, we have heard that and our hearing, thank God, is still good. What we ask you is whether you are a servant of the law—yes or no?"

"No, your excellency, but . . ."

"Have you a written commission from their worships the States general of Holland, or from the legal authorities?"

"No, excellency. I had indeed a letter from my lord the Fiscal but . . . "

"But you cannot produce it," the count went on, shaking his head mockingly. "That is a pity.—Or is it the custom at the Hague to entrust the execution of justice to tapsters and tavern-keepers?"

"It is certainly not the custom," replied Ruytenburgh. "But since the young lady

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was carried off, as I have said, from my house, the Fiscal and Heer Rixen understood . . ."

"Or have you," the count again broke in, "any command over the men-at-arms who have had the audacity to enter our town without asking our leave?"

"No, my lord," said Ruytenburgh. "They were sent with me by my lords the States-deputies of Utrecht to help me to apprehend the guilty persons who . . ."

"What!" roared Waldeck, giving his words all the expression of violent anger, "you have no authority over these troopers, you are no messenger of the law, you have no written orders from any recognized authority, you cannot even prove that you are the person you give yourself out to be, and you expect that we should deliver over in all good faith to unknown and unauthorized hands certain persons who have craved our safe-conduct, and against whom there

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is no proof of any misdemeanour or crime?"

Jan van Ruytenburgh, utterly taken aback, stood for some minutes speechless. But he presently recovered himself, and said:

"But I swear to your excellency that Mortaigne is guilty of abduction, and carried off the young lady in question from under my roof."

"And we could prove the contrary," said the count, taking out a paper which he held up for Ruytenburgh to see. "Here is his petition for a free-pass, in due form, signed by this very Mortaigne, and by Catharine d'Orléans, as man and wife.—Can you read?—Then here you see: J. D. de Mortaigne and Catharine d'Orléans, a married couple."

"The signature is false," said the innkeeper, without hesitation; for he could not believe that the young lady would have let

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herself be persuaded to sign such a document.

"The signature is genuine," said Chavallerie. "That paper was signed in my presence. Or dare you assert that the word of a gentleman is false?"

"Then she must have been driven to this by force," said Ruytenburgh. "After the way in which she was seized, it is impossible that she should have yielded of her own free will."

"That is all very well," said the count, "but still you cannot expect that we should put more confidence in what you tell us than in the written testimony of the persons concerned; nor that we should pay any heed to your charge when the only person who has any right to bring one makes no complaint?"

"But your excellency must surely perceive," Ruytenburgh went on, "that my lords of Utrecht would not have given me

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an escort of armed men if they had not felt convinced that I had good grounds for demanding it."

"What should I know about it?" said Waldeck. "Your men may be deserters, or gallow-birds, who have taken upon themselves to stand by you in this attempt to gain your end. If the gentlemen at Utrecht had anything to say to me, it strikes me that they might have found some more proper way of doing so than by a message through a tavern-keeper from the Hague, without credentials."

"Your excellency can send a man to Utrecht to ascertain the truth," said Ruytenburgh. "And, as regards the young lady, I am convinced that to-morrow, before the day is out, letters will reach you from the States of Holland, if not my lord the Fiscal in person, to demand the surrender and to effect the capture of this Mortaigne."

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"When they shall come we shall know what steps to take," said the count. "And till then we will not let nor hinder a man against whom nothing has been proven, and to whom we have granted our safe-conduct. What do you think, gentlemen?" he added turning to Chavallerie and the seneschal.

The former was content with bowing his consent, and the official dared not definitely express his disapproval of the count's inaction; but at the same time he felt that he could not remain silent when his master's interests, as well as his own, might, for lack of caution, be placed in jeopardy.

"I fully agree," he said at length, "that this man cannot prove his authority, and that my lords of Utrecht might have treated a neighbour of your excellency's rank with rather more respect. But still, it is a thing within the range of possibility that Mortaigne may have tried to deceive us all, and

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that the damsel's signature to the petition may have been obtained by cunning or by coercion. Your excellency would therefor most certainly do well to take steps, whereby, for the present, everything should continue *in statu quo.* Mortaigne, for instance, should not be allowed to communicate with the lady, and his followers should be watched, till it can be ascertained whether or no the man is deceiving us."

Ruytenburgh listened to this suggestion with an approving nod while the count paused to think it over. Ruytenburgh's tone of conviction had not failed of its effect on him; and although he tried to conceal it he was not altogether easy as to the way in which the States-general of Holland might regard the safe-conduct he had granted to Mortaigne. Finally, in the conversation he had held with Mortaigne that same morning, that gentleman had made it appear that the young lady had accom-

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panied him of her own free will, a fact which seemed confirmed both by her reply to the mayor, and by her signature to the petition; and on these grounds he had promised Mortaigne to aid and protect him so far as he could with propriety, and without injury to himself; still, he was well aware that the girl was under age, and under the guardianship of the law of Holland which might perhaps assert her incompetency as a minor to renounce its protection of her own free will. The upshot of his meditations was that he chose the course which, in his opinion, was prescribed alike by expediency, by his own desire for safety, and by his promise to Mortaigne.

"Listen," said he to Ruytenburgh, "we will do what you require. If the young lady was in fact dwelling under your roof and carried away against her will, she will recognize you and be glad to see you. Go then, with these gentlemen, who will con-

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duct you to the *Golden Lion* where she now is; if she wishes to return with you that shall be a sign that you speak the truth; if, on the contrary, she refuses to see you or speak with you, the reverse will be proved."

"That does not follow," replied Ruytenburgh. "She may very likely have been cajoled by this Mortaigne, and in any case, even if she wished it, I know full well that her family would never consent to the marriage."

"Well then," said the count, "I will take every precaution. Chavallerie, do you meanwhile take care that the young maid —or the young wife, whichever she may be —has separate lodgings apart from Mortaigne's, and with some thoroughly respectable folks. More than this, it seems to me, I cannot in honour undertake."

And Ruytenburgh, seeing that for the moment he could gain nothing further,

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made a virtue of necessity and followed the two gentlemen.

"We ought to have every security," said the seneschal, who was a lover of formalities, to Chavallerie as they went up the street. "We will take with us Meester Goesbeeck, the notary, to bear witness to the young lady's statements. I will go round by his house and see if he is at home."

"Do so," said Chavallerie, perceiving that he might thus gain time to warn Mortaigne. "I will wait for you at the *Golden Lion*."

Hereupon the gentlemen parted company; Chavallerie went on with Ruytenburgh to the *Golden Lion*, where the Utrecht troopers, knowing of nothing better to be done at Kuilenburg, had by this time established themselves. Our gentleman, desiring Ruytenburgh to await him in the porch, hurried up-stairs and sent for

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Mortaigne, with whom he retired into a room apart to inform him of the count's intentions.

"You hear," he added, "I am to part you and your lady-love. Happily the count fixed no time, so we need be in no hurry to carry out his orders. But as to the other object of our visit: Do you think that the young lady will be inclined to grant an interview to this Ruytenburgh or whatever his name may be?"

"I flatter myself," said Mortaigne with a self-satisfied air, "that she has chosen her line of conduct and will not now be persuaded to desert me, either by this Ruytenburgh or by any one else. Besides, I will explain to her—but what is that infernal noise?"

"They seem to have come to fisticuffs below stairs," said Chavallerie. "I will go and see what is the matter, and you, meanwhile, talk to the girl."

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The tumult they had heard, and which was steadily increasing, arose from a very natural cause. Ruytenburgh, seeing no reason for remaining in the porch when he could wait more at his ease elsewhere, had gone into the common-room, where he heard the men-at-arms talking and laughing. But as he entered, the first person he saw, nay, whom he almost knocked over, was Spinel.

"Hah! What, you here, you confounded rascal!" he exclaimed. "But why need I wonder? It is a matter of course that I should come upon you among this gang of robbers."

Spinel was abashed for a moment by this unexpected meeting, but quickly recovered himself and said with an insolent smile:

"As I live, Master Ruytenburgh! You here? And has your man got over the attack? Well, I did not expect to see

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you again so soon when I was compelled to quit you so abruptly."

"Indeed!" said Ruytenburgh in a fury. "Nor you did not hope it, I presume. But you shall not escape me now so easily as you did that evening; I will teach you how I punish those who lure me out of my house on false pretences."

And as he spoke he put out one heavy hand and seized Spinel by the collar, raising the other to deal him a tremendous box on the ear. Spinel evaded the blow by suddenly ducking his head against his antagonist's chest, while he threw both arms round Ruytenburgh's body. The soldiers on one side and Vollenhove and Feyt, who were also in the common-room, on the other, rushed to separate the combants, who meanwhile were dragging each other hither and thither, overthrowing benches and chairs, till at length they both fell against the table, and rolled on to the

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floor with it and everything that was upon it. At this moment Chavallerie appeared on the scene and asked what all the uproar might mean.

"This is the rascal," replied Ruytenburgh, "who, the evening before last, decoyed me out of my house, and so abetted the abduction of the young lady. — But he shall not escape me!"

"You shall not lay a finger on him at this present," said Chavallerie. "Stand up, and behave decently as long as you are here." And taking Ruytenburgh by the collar, he dragged him by force away from his antagonist.

"It shall never be said that I let the villain go scot-free," cried Ruytenburgh, beside himself with rage. "You men," he added, appealing to his escort, "you were sent here by my lords at Utrecht to help and succour me. Assist me now and take that scoundrel prisoner."

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The men-at-arms made as though they would obey this order, and Vollenhove and Feyt were about to draw in Spinel's defence, when Chavallerie placed himself between the two parties.

"Hold!" he cried. "No fighting within the walls of Kuilenburg, or I hand the first man that strikes a blow over to the mayor. —If you have anything to say against this man," he went on, turning to Ruytenburgh, "go with him outside the town and hammer each other as long as you like; I will do nothing to hinder you. But as to taking him prisoner, that is quite out of the question. We know no authority here but the count and his mayor. — And here he is in person."

In fact, at this very moment, Meester Martensz walked in; for the inn-wife, at the beginning of the riot, had at once run off to fetch him.

"What is the matter here?" he asked

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wiping the sweat from his face, for he had come at a round pace. "Who is breaking his excellency's peace?"

"If you are the mayor of this town, let this villain be secured," said Ruytenburgh, pointing to Spinel. "He is an accomplice in the abduction which I have come hither to complain of."

"An abduction!" exclaimed the official. "Who is here accused of *raptus?*"

"By your leave, Master Mayor," said Vollenhove stepping forward, "this man, who is unknown to us, came rushing in here like a madman while we were quietly sitting over our supper, and fell upon my comrade there and thrashed him without the shadow of a reason."

"Excepting that he is a scoundrel and deceived me," said Ruytenburgh.

"You must certainly know," Vollenhove went on to the mayor, "that my master, the Jonker de Mortaigne, received this

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morning from my lord the count a letter of safe-conduct for himself, his wife and his servants, and that consequently his excellency's honour is aggrieved when a stranger intrudes to insult and maltreat one of our party."

"No doubt," said the man of law with an assenting nod. "*Optime loquere;* you speak the words of wisdom. And you," he asked of Ruytenburgh, "have you a free-pass or safe-conduct?"

"My safe-conduct is here," replied the man pointing to the troopers.

"*Milites extraneos,* alien soldiers," said the mayor. "But I doubt whether his excellency will regard their protection as sufficient, or allow their presence here, as being *omnibus privilegiis repugnans,* adverse to all privilege," and he looked enquiringly at Chavallerie.

"His excellency has certainly seen with no kindly eye the small respect paid by the

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States of Utrecht to his rights and dignities as Lord of Kuilenburg," said this gentleman. "And I believe it would best please his highness the count that this man with his men-at-arms should, now that he has delivered his errand, return to the place whence he came."

"But I have not done my errand," said Ruytenburgh. "At any rate not completed it. And this gentleman knows very well that the count has given me permission to speak with the young lady; nay, that the other gentleman is actually gone to fetch the notary—but here they are."

"Well," said the seneschal, who came in with Meester Goesbeeck, "is the damsel ready to receive us?"

"She will see you gladly," replied Chavallerie. "But whether she will receive this turbulent fellow"—and he pointed to Ruytenburgh—"is quite another matter."

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And in fact, when the seneschal and the notary were admitted to Catharine d'Orléans she frankly declared that she did not wish to hold any intercourse with Ruytenburgh, a declaration to which she set her signature when the notary had drawn it up in due form.

"Then, indeed, I have no further business here," said Ruytenburgh when he heard this, bursting with rage and indignation. "Then certainly the best thing I can do is to return to the Hague and mind my own business!"

CHAPTER IX.

Relates how the coachman Nicolas and other more important persons came from the Hague to Kuilenburg, and what befel there.

MEANWHILE the abduction of Catharine d'Orléans had caused no small stir at the Hague. Not only had the Dutch Law

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Court assembled forthwith, and taken up the cause of the girl whom, as a minor, it regarded as under its guardianship; but the crime was made the subject of a resolution at a meeting of the States-general, both as to the infamy of the deed itself, and as to its issues.

"What would it not lead to," so the governing body agreed, "if persons could with impunity be carried off from the heart of the Hague under the very eyes as it were of the rulers? If the miscreants had begun with a young girl, to-morrow they might seize a member of the government, nay the grand pensioner himself!"

Letters-patent were prepared, addressed to all governors and towns, to ascertain under whose jurisdiction the runaways had found a place of refuge, and the Court offered a reward of one thousand rix-thalers for the capture of the chief criminal and two hundred for that of his accomplices.

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While all this was doing, on Wednesday morning the Prince of Taranto's coachman returned with the information that the fugitives had gone to Kuilenburg, and would probably remain there. As soon as this was known the Court commissioned Councillor Rixen and the Fiscal to proceed to Kuilenburg and demand the surrender both of the guilty parties and of the young lady; meanwhile a courier was sent out to deliver the letters-patent from the Assembly. So great was the zeal of the faithful Nicolas, in his desire to see the young lady, whom he had regarded as a charge placed in his trust by his master, once more at liberty, and so great his regret at having turned back before reaching Kuilenburg, that he now determined, in spite of the fatigues he had gone through, to return thither at once; and he took a place with the courier, in his mail-cart, which was to start from the Hague that evening.

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It was at Alfen that he met Jan van Ruytenburgh on his way from Kuilenburg, anything rather than pleased at the result of his journey, which had cost him time, fatigue, and money, and all for nothing. He had also been obliged to treat the troopers on their return-journey, and saw little hope of having his expenses repaid him. Nicolas comforted him as best he could; but he swore at the same time that they should not be rid of him so easily, and that he would not quit Kuilenburg without the young lady.

By Thursday morning at break of day they found themselves at the ferry over the Leck, just in time to embark in the boat which was putting off from the shore. In the barge there happened to be, besides some country-folks and peddlers, a horseman, who, as soon as he saw Nicolas, wrapped himself more closely in his cloak, hung his head, and slunk behind his horse

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which he was holding by the bridle. This was none other than our old acquaintance Vollenhove. He had gone to Utrecht the evening before to make enquiries as to whether any more pressing measures had been taken against his master, and was now on his way back. He at once understood whither the two men in the post-cart were bound, and what business it was that took them there; and he immediately thought of a plan to delay them on their way. The Goddess Fortuna, as they would have said in the classical cant of the seventeenth century—or the Devil, to whom the romanticists of our day would ascribe it—throughout this history never took the part of the good folk; and this time again he played into Vollenhove's hand. The mail-cart had come as far forward on the ferry-barge as it could; Nicolas and the courier had got out and stood, as usual, at the horse's head, looking at the shore to which they

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were to cross. Thus Vollenhove succeeded in slipping between the chaise and the edge of the barge without being observed, and there he quickly and violently wrenched the pin out of the axle of the wheel, and retired again into the background, awaiting the issue.

The ferry-boat having reached the other side, the courier's horse, led by the bridle, drew the cart on shore, Nicolas pushing behind. Thus far all was well; the two men mounted into their seats, and the courier laid his whip over his nag's back; but hardly had he started along the dyke to the left, thus turning the vehicle out of a direct line, than the wheel came off, the cart upset and rolled on the road, horse, travellers, and all.

"Ha! ha! That is good luck!" thought Vollenhove; "time gained is everything gained." And mounting his own horse he galloped on ahead. He could not, how-

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ever, as he rode past, resist glancing at the poor wretches who lay sprawling on the ground; thus his eye happened to meet that of Nicolas who at once recognized him.

"A horse! A horse!" shouted the coachman, threatening the valet with his fist. "That villain is a servant of Mortaigne's, and he has contrived this disaster."

And scrambling up, he helped his somewhat battered companion on to his feet.

We must leave them to get out of this vexatious predicament as best they may, and follow Vollenhove, who hastened on as if hunters were at his heels, and never drew rein till he reached the *Golden Lion* at Kuilenburg, where he immediately sought out his master.

"Jonker," said he, as soon as they were alone, "it is high time that we should be off

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again before this place is too hot for us. We escaped from danger yesterday because Ruytenburgh could bring no proof of his authority, but to-day things look badly, for though the courier, whom I managed to bowl down the dyke at Vianen, may have broken his neck, the letters-patent, which no doubt he was carrying, will certainly find their way hither."

"A courier!" said Mortaigne.

"With the Prince of Taranto's coachman," said Vollenhove, and he gave a brief account of what had happened, ending with the advice that Mortaigne should quit Kuilenburg for some other place, with Catharine and his followers, and the sooner the better.

"What a plaguy stupid business!" said Mortaigne. "Just a moment before you came in Chavallerie was here, to tell me that the count, to whom the seneschal has been complaining that I have not yet acted

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on the order to separate from Catharine, now insists on her immediate removal."

"It is rather late to think of that," said Vollenhove with a smile. "And where does he propose to bestow her?"

"For the nonce in the adjoining house, where the inn-wife's niece lives; but this evening in the house of her son the sheriff's officer."

"Well," said Vollenhove, "you would still have the opportunity of seeing and speaking with her there; but it would be better, under all the circumstances, to be beforehand with them, and go on your way forthwith."

"I fear," replied the Jonker, "that the count, or rather his vexatious official, who keeps one eye on us, will not now allow us to depart. But be that as it may, I will try what can be done." And taking up his hat he went off to the palace.

"And I," said Vollenhove to himself,

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"as a careful captain, will see to securing our retreat."

To this end he went to find Feyt, and after a few words with him proceeded to the Ferry-house. What he did there we shall presently learn

It was now eight o'clock on Thursday morning, and the count, having breakfasted, was pacing up and down the court-yard, when Mortaigne sent in his name and was at once admitted to his presence.

"My lord count," he began after the customary greetings, "I begin to fear that my longer residence here may involve your excellency in some inconvenience, and I have come, with much gratitude for the protection and hospitality you have afforded me, and for which I shall ever be your debtor, to crave your permission to depart with my wife and servants."

"And for my part, I fear that I cannot

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grant your demand," replied the count. "I dismissed that fellow Ruytenburgh because he had not official warranty, but I could not altogether reject his statement. As a just ruler I am bound to wait for what further information may reach me concerning you, before I take any further steps in your affairs; and meanwhile I desire to be careful that everything remains *in statu quo*."

"In that case," said Mortaigne, "I presume that your excellency will revoke the decision you have lately pronounced, and not separate me from my wife."

"Tut, tut!" said Waldeck. "I have no proof that she is your wife . . ."

"And she is not, my lord; I will stake my life on it!" cried a voice behind the count who, turning round, beheld with no small amazement a man wholly unknown to him, and wearing a livery.

"Who the devil are you," he asked,



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"that you put your word in unbidden? And how dare you thus appear in my presence unannounced?"

"My name is Nicolas," replied the coachman, "and I am in the service of his highness the Prince of Taranto. As to my appearance here before you, I confess that it is somewhat strange and unseemly; but I was standing at the gate, looking about me for some one to show me in, when I saw this scoundrel walking about. And I tell you now, if you be the count, have this fellow locked up in your stronghold and closely guarded."

"Better and better!" exclaimed the count. "Yesterday it was an innkeeper, who at any rate was satisfied to entreat me; to-day it is a livery servant, and he assumes a tone of command."

"I assure you," said Nicolas, "that the Gentlemen of the Assembly . . ."

"The Gentlemen of the Assembly

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choose very strange messengers," Waldeck put in, "but at any rate, are you at least furnished with a letter of authorisation?"

"The letter would be here by this time," said Nicolas, "but that one of this man's confederates brought about an accident which delayed us on our way, at Vianen. I have ridden forward, because speed was needful in the matter; and my companion, their highnesses' courier, will follow me as soon as he has his bruises dressed and can find a vehicle instead of our own, which is lying broken on the dyke. He bears the letters-patent, addressed to your excellency."

"It is unlucky," said the count, "that I am always told of a letter which is to come, while no one appears before me who can show the smallest authority for speaking in such a way."

"The devil's in it!" cried Nicolas. "My lord count, it seems to me that any

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man is authorized to fall on a highwayman, wherever he may find him, and that it ought to be enough for your excellency to have heard the charge brought against this man, to prompt you to place him in confinement."

"I do not require to be taught my duty in such a case, by any man," replied Waldeck, pacing up and down in a rage. "I shall await the contents of the letter which you say is coming; and till then, Jonker Mortaigne, the good town of Kuilenburg is your prison.—As to you, my friend," he added to Nicolas, "you have no further business here. If I want to hear more of you I will send for you. — You see," he added to Mortaigne, when the coachman had retired ill-content, "that in these circumstances I cannot agree to your request, and must keep you and the lady you call your wife apart for the present. Meanwhile be quite easy. I have promised to

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protect you, and Henry of Waldeck never gives his word in vain."

With these words the count dismissed Mortaigne, little pleased with the turn affairs had taken, and retired to his rooms, where, about two hours later, he was told of the arrival of the courier bringing letters from the States-general. They were conceived in such peremptory terms, and so positively required the apprehension of Mortaigne and his accomplices, and the safe-keeping of the damsel till she should be restored to the hands of her friends, that the count could not refuse to act on them unless he was prepared for open war with the republic. He therefor sent for the lawyer, Martensz, and for his seneschal, and ordered that the necessary measures should be taken to hinder the accused from departing privily from the town.

Very early on the following morning the Fiscal van Stryen, and Councillor

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Rixen, with Mevrouw Boreel, who had undertaken to bring her niece home again under her own care, all arrived at Kuilenburg. They went in the first instance to the mayor, and on the strength of the information he gave them, Rixen and Mevrouw Boreel repaired to the house where Catharine was at present dwelling, while van Stryen waited on the count, and in a very high tone gave him to understand that he was held responsible, inasmuch as, notwithstanding that he had received timely and repeated information of the crime which had been committed, the guilty parties were not yet apprehended and placed in the power of the Fiscal. The count excused himself as best he might, and gave instructions to his mayor immediately to take the accused persons into custody.

But the proceedings which the lawyer set in motion forthwith, failed of success; nowhere in Kuilenburg was a trace of the

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miscreant to be found; and this for the very good reason that no one ever thought of seeking him in the castle itself, into which Mortaigne, on the previous evening, had been privily admitted by Chavallerie, who had provided him with a hiding-place in his room. Vollenhove, Spinel, and Feyt had already vanished without even giving their master notice of their intentions. As to Goldestede and Gonser, they had remained at the Ferry-house; only the lad fell into the hands of justice, and he reported that Vollenhove and Gonser had departed the day before with the horses, and had not returned.

Greatly displeased with the count's conduct in the affair the Fiscal, not choosing therefor to accept any civilities, refused his highness's invitation to take up his abode at the palace, or even to take a meal there, and went off to the *Golden Lion* where Rixen presently joined him.

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"Well," said he as he entered, "are the criminals in custody?"

"Do not speak of it!" cried van Stryen. "It would seem that this little town, which a frog might jump over, is nevertheless large enough to hide a rascal and his accomplices, for that ass of a mayor cannot find them, although he pledges his word that they have not quitted Kuilenburg, and so must still be lurking somewhere here."

"So much the better," said Rixen with a sigh.

"How the better?" said the lawyer, looking up in amazement. "Do you wish that the scoundrels should escape punishment?"

"What can I say?" replied Rixen. "I have just seen my niece, and as matters stand it would be better for her honour and that of the family that Mortaigne should repair the evil he has done by marrying her."

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"What?" cried Van Stryen, "would you, as her guardian, allow that this adventurer instead of being punished for his shameful deed, should get a reward and be master of your niece and her fortune."

"Do you think it would be better," said Rixen, "that the girl should be a laughing-stock throughout the country, and never dare hold her head up again?"

"That is no concern of mine," replied the Fiscal, "and I have nothing to do with it. You yourself denounced the crime to the Court; the Court took cognizance of the matter, and justice must take its course."

"But I can withdraw the charge," said Rixen.

"That you cannot," replied the lawyer. "It is too late for that, and the Court would lay itself open to scorn and blame if, in such circumstances, it brought its proceedings to no issue. Besides. consider; Mis-

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tress Catharine d'Orléans is not merely your ward but the ward of the State, and consequently the State alone has a right to abstain from further prosecution. But all this is for future consideration. The Court may afterwards, and when sentence has been passed, prefer mercy to justice; but at present it is my duty, and I should say yours too, to do everything which may conduce to the execution of the orders we are to carry out, and not to allow this Waldeck to laugh the Superior authorities to scorn.—But how is it that Mevrouw Boreel is not with you?"

"She is," said Rixen, "and, alas, has wasted her eloquence in a vain endeavour to persuade Catharine to return with us to the Hague. The girl will not hear of going back there; whether because Mortaigne has bewitched her, or because a very natural feeling of shame makes her dread the eyes of her friends and acquaint-

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ance. I beg you once more to consider well whether it would not be better that we should save her reputation by an amicable compromise."

And Mevrouw Boreel, who came back to the inn in the course of the evening, took the same view as Rixen; but both were shipwrecked on the Fiscal's immovable obstinacy. This official, indignant at finding that not the Count of Kuilenburg alone, but Catharine d'Orléans herself, seemed to make light of the Court's injunctions, sent off a courier to the Hague with a report of the proceedings so far.

Both the States-general and the Government of the province took this contempt of their authority very seriously; the Court sent two gentlemen, Heer Goes and Heer Fannius, as commissioners to Kuilenburg, to leave no possible means untried of securing the guilty persons, and with express instructions not to return without the stolen

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damsel; and the States-general also sent a courier, with a formal injunction to the Count of Kuilenburg to execute the demands previously addressed to him, and at the same time warning him against the disastrous results to himself if there should be any further hesitancy on his part.

CHAPTER X.

Relating how Mortaigne escaped from Kuilenburg and what came of it.

WHILE the States and Court of Holland were concerting the measures reported in the former chapter, and their various agents were at work, Mortaigne still remained in hiding in the palace at Kuilenburg, where his presence was known only to Chavallerie who had concealed him there, and to the count, who, on one hand, not daring to offend the States of Holland and, on the

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other, not wishing to withhold from Mortaigne the protection he had promised him, was considering as to how he could fulfil these twofold duties. That our hero's position was anything rather than enviable will be easily understood; nevertheless, he remained convinced that, if Catharine should hold good in her persistent refusal to quit her present residence and return to her family at the Hague, the matter could yet be arranged. On Monday, the 24th of March, however, it was with a less satisfied look than usual that his friend entered the room where Mortaigne was trying to make the time seem shorter by practising shuffling and dealing cards, and tricks of sleight of hand much in vogue among the notorious gamblers of that time.

"What is the matter, Chavallerie?" asked Mortaigne, laying down the pack. "Your looks, it seems to me, augur no good."

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"Things look black," said Chavallerie. "With the best will in the world the count can no longer protect you."

"Why, what has happened?" said Mortaigne changing colour.

"The count is no longer master in his own domain," replied Chavallerie. "An hour ago two commissioners arrived here from the capital, bringing fresh letters from the States-general, of no pleasant import. The count is compelled to yield to the demands forced upon him."

"What are they?"

"That you will understand when I tell you what has already occurred since the arrival of these gentlemen. In the first place every gate is closed, and every bridge drawn up—even that which leads from this palace to the town."

"But then I am in a trap," said Mortaigne.

"In the second place," Chavallerie went

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on, "the count has been required to proclaim all over the town with beating of drums, that no one shall dare to give shelter to you or any one of your adherents on pain of a fine of one thousand florins, besides other punishment at the pleasure of the Court."

"And the count himself has no mind to pay the penalty," said Mortaigne biting his lip.

"In the third place," Chavallerie said, "one of your men, who remained at the Ferry-house and was there taken into custody, has been handed over to the Fiscal—under a protest *de non praejudicando* to be sure."

"I am only sorry that they were not all caught!" said Mortaigne. "The ungrateful rascals! They vanished without giving me notice — Vollenhove, above all, from whom I did not expect it.—But what is the protest of which you speak?"



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"An agreement," replied Chavallerie, "whereby, as Meester Martensz explained to me very learnedly, the count no doubt allows the prisoners to pass into the power of the States of Holland, but without being required to surrender his right to deal with their person."

"That may be of some good to the poor devils," said Mortaigne. "Well, and what more?"

"The worst is still to come," said his friend. "The commissioners have been to the house where your lady-love is lodging, and there explained to her that she was to hold herself in readiness to start, within an hour, on her return to the Hague with her relations."

"To return to the Hague!" echoed Mortaigne, letting his head drop till it rested on his arms. "Then I have had all my trouble for nothing!"

"Certainly it cannot be said that the

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business is going smoothly," Chavallerie remarked.

"And now," Mortaigne began after thinking for some time, "as I understand, the count, who is so ready and docile in obeying the outrageous demands of my lords commissioners, will esteem it his duty — or rather his interest — to fulfil their high commands by handing me over to them."

"The count," said Chavallerie, "has promised you his protection, and he is minded to keep his word. But can he do it efficiently? That is the question."

"Is he not lord and master here?" asked Mortaigne firing up, "and must he submit to the law laid down by strangers?"

"You forget," said Chavallerie, "that the States of Holland regard him as a vassal; and even if it were not so, where could he collect forces to resist them? Besides, our seneschal, who is even more

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alarmed than my master lest their high mightinesses' wrath should fall on him, would like nothing better than to make his peace with them by surrendering you, and if he smells out your hiding-place you may confidently rely on his revealing it."

"I understand," said Mortaigne bitterly, "I am to be the victim."

"Do not speak so foolishly," his friend replied. "The count would consider his honour impeached for ever if he permitted the safe-conduct he gave you to be violated by any one living, or delivered you over to your enemies. But he expects that you, on your part, should be generous enough to help him out of the critical position in which he finds himself."

"Then what is it that he wants me to do?" asked Mortaigne. "Must I give myself up?"

"No," replied Chavallerie, "but you must fly while it is yet time."

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"Fly!" repeated Mortaigne. "And how do you expect me to do that when, as you tell me, all the gates are closed."

"Leave that to me," said Chavallerie. "No one can accomplish the impossible; but I will do the utmost I can for you. And not only will the count do all that lies in his power to help you to get off quickly, but here, among my friends in the palace, there are plenty who ask nothing better than to be of service to you. Be in readiness and expect me here as soon as it is dusk."

With these words he departed, leaving Mortaigne in a far from happy frame of mind. Thus all his projects were frustrated and his evil deed fruitless. It was with bitter curses on his hard fate, on the Count of Kuilenburg, the commissioners, Catharine d'Orléans, and above all on Vollenhove, who had left him in the lurch, that he dressed himself and awaited Chaval-

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lerie's return. It was scarcely dark when his friend, true to his word, made his appearance.

"Good news!" said he. "You were blaming your faithful Vollenhove, but he has not forgotten you. Just now a man from outside has brought me a note in which your servant says that, as circumstances and necessity required him to leave Kuilenburg, he will wait at Beuzichem, where everything is prepared for your escape. I sent him word to hold himself in readiness."

"My escape!" said Mortaigne. "That is all very fine; but how am I to get out?"

"Do not be uneasy on that score," said Chavallerie, "the gate-keeper will not refuse me the key of the gate."

"And shall not I be recognized?" asked Mortaigne with some uneasiness.

"That too is provided against," said

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Chavallerie, depositing on the table a bundle he had brought in under his arm. "Here are a trooper's cloak and hat and feathers, well known to all Kuilenburg as those of our friend the chevalier Struyk, who is happy to lend them to you, and these will be a sufficient disguise."

"And then," said Mortaigne, as he donned the borrowed garments, "how shall I manage to get any further?"

"Vollenhove will have seen to that," replied Chavallerie. "Now linger no more; you are losing precious time."

"In Heaven's name then!" said Mortaigne, following his friend, who led him down a back staircase into the court-yard. They soon reached the gate opening on to the Drift—the alley round the outside of the town. Here Chavallerie tapped lightly at the gate-keeper's window.

"Who is there?" asked a voice within.

"I, Chavallerie," replied that gentle-

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man. "We should like to get a mouthful of fresh air, the chevalier and I; and you promised to let us have the key."

The gate-keeper put his head out of his door, and seeing no more than two persons, one of them known to him by the tone of his voice, and the other by his braided cloak, he handed over the key without demur. Chavallerie opened the wicket door and the two friends were soon outside. On reaching the Drift they turned up the road leading to Beuzichem; and it was not till they had gone half the distance between Kuilenburg and that village that Chavallerie took leave of his friend and returned to the town. Mortaigne went on, not without some hesitancy, fearing still that he might be captured, till, within a bow-shot of the hamlet, a man suddenly stood before him, stopping the way.

"Who goes there?" asked the stranger,

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in a voice which Mortaigne recognized at once.

"Feyt!" cried the fugitive. "Are you here? And where are the others?"

"All well!" said Feyt overjoyed. "Please to follow me, Sir. We have not an instant to lose."

And leading the way, he conducted him a little further to a cross-road where Vollenhove and Spinel were waiting with the four horses saddled and packed. Their presence was soon explained by what had gone before. On hearing that any longer stay in Kuilenburg had become impossible, Vollenhove had advised Feyt to make his way home by Buren, with Spinel. He himself had gone down to the Ferry-house, had fetched out the horses and had gone off with them, and with Gonser, under pretext of exercising the beasts. Instead of returning, he had ridden out to Buren where he had waited for Spinel and Feyt

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to join him. Before long tidings reached him of the danger to which Mortaigne was exposed at Kuilenburg, and these had made Vollenhove decide on being prepared at all hazards to aid his master's flight. With Spinel, Feyt and the horses (Gonser had taken fright, and gone home) he returned so far as to Beuzichem whence, as we have seen, he sent a message to Chavallerie, of which we know the results. And now our runaways tarried no longer, but, mounting at once, set spurs into their steeds and rode off towards the Betuwe.

Mortaigne's evasion with his adherents, however secretly accomplished, could not long remain unknown and presently came to the ears of the State commissioners. Although they had no direct proof that the count's palace had served as a place of refuge for the man they sought, still they soon learnt, by cross-examining the porter, that one of the count's gentlemen had had a

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hand in the matter; and this circumstance, added to other causes of complaint against the count, and above all their fury at the escape of their prey, resulted in a report laid before the Court a few days later by Councillor Fannius which was anything rather than favourable to Henry of Waldeck. In that report—which Aitzema has embodied in his account of the affair—the following points were insisted on as adverse to the count:

I. That on the Wednesday, when Jan van Ruytenburgh had arrived with certain troopers sent by the Assembled Deputies of Utrecht, and the count had been duly apprised of the shameful way in which the young lady had been stolen away, he had not forthwith taken steps to secure the person of the accused and his accomplices but had tried to excuse himself by alleging that the said Ruytenburgh had no official authority. Seeing that the escort

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of troopers sufficed to lend him such authority, inasmuch as that the government was not in the habit of giving private persons a military escort without some strong reason.

II. That the order to keep Mortaigne and the young lady apart, though received on Wednesday was not carried into effect till Thursday.

III. That on the Thursday he had paid even less heed to the demand, presented to him by the Prince of Taranto's coachman, that the accused should be apprehended; but that, on the contrary, he had seen and spoken with Mortaigne and sent him him away free.

IV. That on that same day, even after he had received the letters-patent of the States, he had been at no pains to take the guilty parties into custody, which might then have been effected without much difficulty.

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V. That instead of showing himself obedient to the letters-patent of the States, and acting in conformity, he had caused a ward of the States to be cross-examined as to whether she had not in fact come away with the accused of her own free will — a proceeding which proved as against the count: Firstly, that he paid little respect to the said letters-patent; secondly, that he was willing that the said ward should remain in the power of the accused, under pretext of "her own free will"; thirdly, that he knew that the accused was still in hiding in Kuilenburg since every enquiry elsewhere had been fruitless.

VI. That on the 21st of March he had not chosen to deliver the young lady over to the Fiscal, who had been sent by the Court with strict injunctions to demand her surrender; again under the pretext that she had run away of her own free will— whereas he must have known that she, be-

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ing under age had no free will but was under the authority and control of the government—a further proof that he had been willing to allow the afore-mentioned lady to remain with the accused, against the injunctions of the legal authorities of the States-general.

VII. That after the arrival of the Fiscal, and the receipt of letters-patent from the Assembly and from their high mightinesses, he had not made the smallest effort to secure the person of the accused, either by closing the gates, searching the houses, beating of drums, or any other means.

VIII. That the so-called separation of the accused and the young lady had been gone through merely *pro forma*, allowing them in fact to meet as before, since. Firstly: whereas the separation had been enjoined on Wednesday, it had not been carried into effect until Thursday, whereby

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the accused had gained twelve hours, which in such a case is of the first importance; secondly, whereas, after the young lady had been removed from the *Golden Lion* Inn, she had not been placed in a house duly far from it, but first in an adjoining dwelling inhabited by the inn-wife's two nieces, and then in the house of the aforesaid inn-wife's son, to which the accused had free access; so that, in fact he had visited her there on the Thursday evening.

IX. That after the arrival of the Commissioners Goes and Fannius, on Monday, the 24th of March, in despite of the earnest representations they had made and of the letters again addressed to him by their high mightinesses, nay, and of the menaces of the government, he had allowed that day and a large part of the next to elapse without taking any effectual steps to secure the accused and his accomplices, and that, con-

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sequently, during the night between Monday and Tuesday the accused had escaped, conducted through the gate of the count's private demesne and out of the town of Kuilenburg by one Chavallerie, he being a gentleman attached to the count's court.

From all this it was plain that his lordship the count, far from submitting to the demands, or even the threats announced to him by the States, had aided and abetted the crime.

These heads of the charge against the count — set forth at large in the document in question — were laid before the Court and brought to the cognizance of the States-general; and they, taking a very high tone as to the Count of Kuilenburg's conduct in the matter, drew up a resolution, dated the 2nd of April, whereby they found good to pronounce, after due deliberation founded on this memorial, sentence to this effect:

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That, as reparation for what had occurred, and as a preventative of such outrageous proceedings for the future, the gates of the town of Kuilenburg were to be taken off their hinges, and the drawbridges fixed, or stone bridges built in their stead, and dams constructed over the town ditch; also, that two breaches should be made in the walls, so that henceforth at all times men might pass in and out, free and unhindered. That, moreover, the afore-named count should pledge himself in writing thenceforth never to give free shelter in the said town to any criminals, bankrupts, or the like, who should fly thither from any of the United Provinces; but, on the contrary, to deliver them over at the first warning to the States, Courts or authorities who might demand them; that the count, as High Steward and Stadtholder, should forthwith be degraded from his office and stewardship, and deprived of his town, his

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rank and title, and not be allowed to resume them; and that in order to carry out this sentence, Lieutenant Colonel Steelandt — who had meanwhile been sent to Kuilenburg with troops on horse and on foot to invest the town—should enter it and see every detail duly executed.

That a serious appeal should be made to the community at large, to secure their assistance in this matter. That an official communication should be sent to all kings, princes and potentates, and especially to the head of the House of the Counts of Waldeck—with whom it was supposed that the accused might have taken refuge—reporting fully all that had happened, with a request that he might be taken into custody wherever he might be found and delivered up to the States-general.

That, to the end that the accused and the young lady should be cut off from all hope of ever living together, the Court of

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Holland should cause a document to be drawn up informing the said ward of the Court in the name of their high mightinesses that they trusted she did not cherish the smallest notion of keeping up a correspondence with the accused; plainly declaring that the Court would never permit such a thing, but in case she and he should at any time get themselves married, it would pursue them wherever they might be, and when they fell into its hands, would punish them after their deserts; while in such a case not a stiver of her fortune should ever be allowed her to live upon.

As may be imagined the Count of Kuilenburg was not particularly pleased by the contents of this resolution, and bitterly cursed the hour when Mortaigne had thought fit to select Kuilenburg as his place of refuge. In this hour of need he betook himself to Nymegen to crave the advocacy and protection of the States of

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Gelderland, then assembled at that town, and as we shall presently see, they were not denied him. Meanwhile he caused a lengthy memorial to be drawn up, in which he endeavoured to clear himself of the charges brought against him, and to appease the wrath of the States-general. This document which was presented on the 9th of April, is said by Aitzema to have filled several folio pages. It is set forth with much judgment and skill; the count's proceedings both as to the facts and as to the law of the case, are justified point by point, and his dignity very worthily maintained. I have however thought it unnecessary to reproduce it here, all the more so because it has been one of the principal sources whence I have derived the facts and details of this narrative and it is needless to lay them before the reader in another form.

The Gelderland Assembly had meanwhile taken counsel of their legal advisers

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and had written a letter to the States-general, in which they suggested to their high mightinesses that it might perhaps be desirable that a commission of their number should join the two commissioners already accredited to Kuilenburg in investigating the count's conduct, on the spot; that they should concert with them as to the steps to be taken to remedy the mischief already done; or, if that were impossible, that they should not allow any hostile proceedings which might be prejudicial to the province of Gelderland to be taken against the Count of Kuilenburg, his town, or his dignity, without hearing them; and that the forces already sent should as soon as possible be recalled to their respective garrisons. The chiefs of the government, to whom the States-general submitted this letter, refused to comply with the petition that they would confer with the Commissioners from Gelderland; they strongly urged on

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the public mind that they ought to be supported in their rights, and declared that if their high mightinesses at all delayed the expression of their opinion in reply to this petition, they would forthwith apprehend the person of the count, as their vassal, and prosecute him as a criminal.

The Commissioners accredited from Gelderland to their high mightinesses in Assembly now presented a more urgent claim in behalf of their province, whereby it was shown that the town and governorship of Kuilenburg was a fief, not of Holland, but of the Prince of Geldre, and consequently of the province of Gelderland; that so long ago as in 1339 the Lord of Kuilenburg had been pledged to hold the place as an open house for the Prince of Geldre and his people, and that the States of Gelderland could therefor exercise direct sovereignty over it; whence they could by right, and with good reason, maintain that

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no one might injure the said town in despite or in contempt of their authority, much less occupy it. In further evidence of their pretensions they adduced the circumstance that in the year 1415 Hubert, Lord of Kuilenburg, whose house was burnt down, had required the consent of the then Prince of Geldre before he could rebuild the ruined edifice—a sufficient proof that even yet the destruction of its walls, bridges and gates could not be effected without prejudice to the province of Gelderland. They moreover gave it to be understood that it lay within their competence, if it should be their good pleasure, to have the count and his servants tried under their protection; they recalled the fact that in past time the Counts of Kuilenburg had always stood within the jurisdiction of the law of Gelderland, and proposed that the present case should also be tried by that Court, to which surely the jurists of the

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neighbouring provinces and courts could find no difficulty in submitting.

This application, it would seem, gave the affair a more favourable turn as regards the Count of Kuilenburg. The States of Holland apparently began to perceive that if they insisted too strongly on having their own way they would be involved in a quarrel over the question as to who was to be regarded as the liege-lord of Kuilenburg. At any rate, it appears from a resolution of the States on April 11th, that on the accepting of a note by which the Count of Kuilenburg pledged himself thenceforth to grant no safe-conducts to any fugitive criminals from the United Provinces, they expressed themselves as satisfied and enforced no further penalty.

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CHAPTER XI.

Relating how Mortaigne was found at Bremen, and what befell him there.

In the previous chapter I have briefly communicated all that occurred as a result of the charge brought against the Count of Kuilenburg to enable the reader to follow the course of events without break. But we must now see what happened to Mortaigne and his followers.

As has been told, on his escape from Kuilenburg, a description of the fugitive was immediately sent to every town and village in the neighbourhood. He, fully understanding that, at a time when there was enmity between the States and the Bishop of Munster, he would nowhere be

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safer than under the bishop's jurisdiction, had gone across Gelderland to Zutphen, and made his way to Munster, intending, as soon as circumstances should allow, to take ship at some northern port and cross to Sweden, where he was convinced that he should be received with open arms. It was on the evening of the 3d of April that he, with Vollenhove, Spinel, Feyt and a fourth servant whom he had hired in Munster, all set forth on horseback, and reaching the gates of the free town of Bremen desired to be admitted.

"What are your names and calling?" asked the sentry who stood by the barrier which stopped the way.

"My name is Volraad," replied Vollenhove who rode first and undertook to speak: "I am a protestant gentleman from Hanover, and I am on my way to Sweden with my servants."

"I will call the captain of the watch,"

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said the sentry. "You must wait till he comes."

"Then make haste if you please," cried Mortaigne, annoyed at any delay.

The soldier looked the man who spoke thus full in the face, and stood staring at him for a minute with an expression of astonishment; then he hurried away into the guard-house. Mortaigne had scarcely heeded him, but nothing of all this had escaped Vollenhove's observation.

"We must retreat," said he, "or all is lost."

"Retreat! Why?" said Mortaigne. "How can you suppose that the soldiers here should know me when they have never set eyes on me till this moment?"

But at that very moment they heard a noise from the guard-house, as of shouldering arms; Spinel and Feyt, warned by Vollenhove's last remark, took fright, and turning their horses, rode off in all haste

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down the road by which they had come; and neither in Bremen nor in the Netherlands were they ever heard of more.

The newly engaged servant, not understanding his comrades' hasty flight, remained doubtful, gazing open-mouthed at his master, who, perceiving that this evasion on the part of two of his followers could not fail to increase the suspicions of the watch was preparing to follow their example.

But it was already too late. The sentry had returned at the head of a file of men-at-arms, and he now seized Mortaigne's horse by the bridle while the others pointed their muskets at the rider himself. No sooner was Vollenhove aware of this turn in their affairs than he set spurs to his steed, leaped him over the barrier, and galloped up the street where he was out of sight before any one could think of stopping or pursuing him.

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By this time the captain of the watch had come down to the gate.

"You are Johan Diederick de Mortaigne," said he, addressing the prisoner, and glancing from him to a paper which he held in his hand.

"My name is Kaspar," replied Mortaigne, "and I am body-servant to the gentleman who has just ridden away."

"Hm!" said the officer, "a strange coincidence. Hair, brown — eyes, brown — strongly built—nose, somewhat aquiline—a scar on the upper lip.—It is strange that it should all agree so exactly with the description of this Mortaigne which has been communicated to the burgomasters of our free town by the States of Holland. I cannot release you without further enquiry, and you must submit to it. Have the goodness to dismount."

While Mortaigne obeyed, grumbling at the delay, and his new servant, who still

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could make nothing of the adventure, followed his example, the officer sent notice to the authorities of the capture he had made, and, at the same time, of the escape of three of the prisoners' travelling companions—and probable accomplices. The burgomasters immediately gave orders that the two they had seized should be brought into their presence; and though Mortaigne adhered for some time to his first declaration, he at last confessed the truth. He was carried to the prison known as the Oosterdwinger, while his man was lodged in the common prison. Information was immediately sent to the States of Holland that Mortaigne was in custody, and everything was done to trace and secure his other followers, but in vain.

Bereft of liberty, and of all help, even, as he then thought, abandoned by his faithful Vollenhove, and convinced that he would be delivered into the hands of the States of

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Holland, Mortaigne at first lost all courage. Soon, however, he began to ponder the means of making friends and protectors, and to this end he feigned sickness and requested the aid of a physician and a minister. This demand was granted and he succeeded by specious talk, in winning the sympathy of both. He represented his crime as a wild outbreak of youth, not deserving so severe a punishment as that threatened by the Dutch authorities; he remembered how his father had lost his life in the cause of protestantism, after having distinguished himself alike in the Hessian and the Swedish armies.

These arguments were not merely listened to by those to whom they were addressed; they were repeated to others. They presently reached to the ears of the Swedish Resident, Steiniger, who out of consideration for the services rendered by the father to the Crown of Sweden, thought

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necessary to intercede for the son with the chief Magistrate of Bremen. Nor was he alone; the ladies, usually soft-hearted when the misdemeanour may have had its origin in a love-affair, took the part of the ravisher, who, in their opinion had at any rate sinned out of love, and urged their fathers or husbands to protect the hapless gallant.

All this placed the burgomasters of the town in no small dilemma. On one hand they were moved to compassion for the prisoner, and would gladly have acceded to the Swedish Resident's remonstrances and the general desire of the inhabitants of the town, by setting him at liberty; but, on the other hand, they were well aware that such a step, especially as they had already written to Holland, would cause grave displeasure to the Dutch government or even perhaps lead to a breach of the peace, which, above all things, was to

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be avoided. They now regretted ever having given any orders for Mortaigne's detension; and, in a faint hope that the Dutch authorities would not demand his surrender, they might perhaps have annulled them, but that a letter arrived in which the States of Holland thanked the Magistrate of Bremen for the service he had done them by apprehending the fugitive, and notified that a prison-warder of their Court was already on the way with a sufficient escort to fetch him back to Holland.

The communication of this letter, and the certainty that the arrival of the officials from the Hague could not now long be delayed, altogether broke Mortaigne's spirit. He heard indeed from time to time, that the representations of the Swedish Resident found an echo from the Swedes, who were settled in the town and the neighbourhood in considerable numbers, and who expressed themselves loudly in

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his favour; but what would that avail him if the authorities had determined to surrender him to the Dutch?

In this crisis of suspense, now fearing the worst and again recovering some hope, he was left till the evening of the 11th of April, when it was announced to him that the gaoler from Holland had arrived with his escort. and that he must be ready to be delivered over into their keeping. And in fact, on the very next day, he was roused at sunrise and informed that a coach was waiting to convey him away. He dressed himself in great dejection and went off; but just as he was stepping into the chaise, a note was put into his hand. He looked about him, but in vain, trying to discover from whom he had received it; look where he might he could only see the two ranks of immovably indifferent soldiers between which the prison-warder had hurried him to the vehicle. However, it struck him as

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probable that this paper thus pressed upon him must contain something of importance, so he clutched it closely in his hand to hide it from the officer on duty, who, being charged with his safe-keeping, got into the chaise with him; but he was on the watch for a convenient opportunity for investigating the contents of the note which had been so deftly conveyed to him.

During the journey no such occasion offered; the coach having crossed the river to the New Town drew up at the military headquarters where the officer transferred his prisoner to an empty cell, and having placed a guard at the door, left Mortaigne to himself. He immediately hastened to the window, opened the note, and read the contents, which consisted of no more than these words:

"Opposite the headquarters stands a house with a Turk's head on the front. Try to get in there and you are free. V."

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The note had been written in pencil, and evidently in great haste; but the initial which served as its signature, was enough to convince Mortaigne that his faithful Vollenhove was the writer—Vollenhove, whom he had for the second time accused in his soul of having abandoned him to his fate at the moment of greatest peril. The knowledge that this brave servant, whose intelligence and courage he had so often already had occasion to prize, was in the vicinity and planning the means of his escape at once revived his hopes. But how was he to follow this advice? How evade his guards and get into the house described to him? This was a question to which he vainly tried to find the answer, yet was it one on which, in the circumstances, he plainly saw that the issue must mainly depend.

We will leave him to his meditations and return for a moment to the persons

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who had been instructed to take charge of the prisoner, and who at this moment found themselves in as great a difficulty as he himself, though from a different cause.

The duty had been entrusted by their high mightinesses to Cornelis Geestdorp, a lieutenant of their guard, and the chief and second warders of the Court—Cornelis van der Beecke and Johan Broekman, with a sergeant of the guard, twelve soldiers and four bailiffs of the law. They had come by Amsterdam, Zwoll, Hardenberg and Lingen, and in this last town had gained fuller information as to Mortaigne and his stay there with his followers; and going on through Luynen, Kloppenburg and Wilthuizen they had discovered, immediately on reaching the domain of Bremen, that they were the object of universal suspicion, and that the looks they met on all sides were far from friendly or benevolent. They ascribed this, however, to the fact that the

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presence of an armed force in foreign uniform within their borders was an unaccustomed and unpleasing sight to the good folk of that part, till, when they were close to Delmenhorst, a man came up to one of the chariots in which they were travelling and called out in threatening tones:

"You need not hurry yourselves, men. You will be at Bremen soon enough to find it not so easy to bring away the man you want. It will be many a day before you get him out of the town. The Bremeners would give two thousand reichthalers never to have caught him, and the Swedes will never let him be taken."

This was so far discouraging that it promised them a more difficult task than they had expected in obtaining possession of Mortaigne. The two prison-officers, however, shrugged their shoulders, being too well assured of the authority and dignity of the Court to imagine that any one,

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at any time, or in any place, would dare to oppose it; the only thing which troubled them as men in office and heads of families, unwilling to prolong their absence from home and from their duties, was the thought that their stay in Bremen might perhaps be extended beyond the time originally proposed. Geestdorp, on the other hand, young, gay, and a bachelor, who regarded this journey less as a duty than as a pleasure-trip, did not think it any great misfortune that a few difficulties should arise to give him the opportunity of seeing a new place at his leisure, and at the cost of his government.

On arriving at Bremen our travellers presented themselves forthwith to the chief burgomaster and delivered the credentials signed by the council in committee. The head of the municipal government of Bremen received them with courtesy though with very visible embarrassment;

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he informed them that the town-council would assemble at eight o'clock on the following morning, and make them acquainted with the determination it should have come to. On this Geestdorp and his companions took leave; the lieutenant and the warders to put up at the *White Swan*, and the sergeant, with the men-at-arms and servants at a hostelry of a humbler class, to rest after their fatigues.

Next morning by nine o'clock they were waited on by Johan Clapmeyer, Secretary of the Government; he presented to them a carefully sealed pocket-book, telling them that it contained the letters and papers found on the person of the accused and on that of the servant who had been taken with him, and that both the prisoners should be delivered over to them; but that their worships the burgomasters in council begged it should be done as quietly as possible.

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This communication was highly satisfactory to the two officers of the law, who concluded that the man they had met by Delmenhorst had misled them in threatening them with difficulties on the part of the Bremen authorities; and the proposal to avoid all publicity was quite in accordance with their wishes. Van der Beecke at once explained that he desired nothing better than that the prisoners should be handed over to him late that evening or very early in the morning. But it was not without amazement that he and his companions heard the secretary's reply:

"No; you must depart now, and the sooner the better; the prisoner has already been transferred to the guard-house at headquarters to be delivered over to your keeping."

Whereupon he withdrew, saying that they should ere long receive more exact information as to how the transaction was

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to be effected. He did, indeed, presently return; but he now brought a very different message. The gentlemen of the council, he said, were much exercised as to how the prisoner should be removed, inasmuch as a strong party had conspired to lie in wait both in the town and in the country beyond, determined to attempt Mortaigne's deliverance; so before deciding they desired to speak with Lieutenant Geestdorp.

The law-officers shook their heads over this communication and looked doubtingly at each other; Van der Beecke took it not a little amiss that he, as the representative of the Dutch government, had not been invited to the conference, but he could do nothing to alter the case, so it was Geestdorp alone who went off with Clapmeyer. On arriving at the town-hall, he was taken into an anteroom, where he was soon joined by a syndic named Wachmans who

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explained to him the dilemma in which the municipality found themselves.

"We are all afraid," said he, "that you will have the greatest difficulty in removing the prisoner. He has friends among the Swedish residents, who are everywhere devoted to him, and in considerable numbers. Only this morning we have been informed that at least thirty Swedish soldiers are in wait on the Wezer to search every vessel going out of the city, and not allow a single boat to pass unchallenged. We only wish you were by this time far enough away with the man you have come to claim, for we have no lack of offers, both by word of mouth and by letter, to take charge of him and keep him here. Nay, even the Swedish Resident has warned us very seriously not to hand him over to you, nor would it surprise us if such strong petitions were addressed to us on his behalf that we could not let him go."

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The lieutenant's face grew longer and longer as he heard this unpleasant announcement, and he began to admit to himself that the task he had undertaken was not so easy as he at first had imagined.

"Does your excellency mean to say," he asked, after a pause during which he stared at the wall, "that under existing circumstances we shall not succeed in conveying the prisoner out of your territory?—Then it certainly would be better that I should write for further orders to their worships the committee of the States."

"The council cannot undertake to say what you should do," said Wachmans: "but we judge it best that you should take him and depart, the sooner the better, before any demands should arrive of such a nature as that the council, as I told you, must refuse to acquiesce. And to this end I must warn you, if you intended to go by

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water, that the other bank of the Wezer is entirely Swedish."

"But what then is to be done?" cried Geestdorp, whose difficulties were closing in on him every moment. "We are strangers here, and see no chance of acting on our orders in this affair unless their worships the burgomasters in council will help us with their advice as to the safest road by which to quit the town."

The syndic undertook to consult the authorities on this point, and returned before long to give the lieutenant this information:

"There are three roads by which you might go: the first by the river, which is so well guarded that you would never get out in safety; the second, that by which you came, through Delmenhorst and Wilthuizen, is very unsafe, indeed dangerous, because Wilthuizen is Swedish; the third is by Brinkham, Vecht and Kloppenburg and is

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the safest for you in our opinion. At the same time, you must understand that we give you no advice on the matter. And above all let no one know which road you propose to take, or I will not be answerable for the consequences."

"I am a soldier," said Geestdorp bowing, "and I know that in such an enterprise silence is the chief thing."

"That is well," said Wachmans; "remember then: Brinkham, Vecht and Kloppenburg."

"Brinkham, Vecht, and Kloppenburg," repeated the lieutenant, and bowing once more he was about to withdraw.

"One thing more, I must impress upon you," said the syndic. "The burgomasters in council desire you to understand that the prisoner is to suffer neither insult nor injury."

"It is neither my habit nor my intention," replied Geestdorp, "to insult or

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injure the unfortunate; still, I would point out to your worship that he is not so much my prisoner as that of the officers of the Court, and that these officials cannot be denied their authority or license to make use of such means as they may judge necessary to secure him."

"I have nothing to do with the officers of justice," said the syndic. "We deliver the prisoner into the hands of their high mightinesses, whose servant you are, and whom you therefore are supposed to represent; hence it is to you that the town council, through me, send this warning, trusting to you to see that it is obeyed."

With these words Wachmans allowed the lieutenant to retire.

Geestdorp returned to his inn and repeated the whole conversation to his two colleagues who, after some discussion, came, like him, to the conclusion that their best plan would be to make their way

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homewards by the road the syndic had suggested.

The municipal government, meanwhile, seemed still to fear that Wachmans might not have expressed their demand as to the respect with which Mortaigne was to be treated, in sufficiently plain terms. In a very short time Mr. Secretary Clapmeyer appeared for the third time at the *White Swan*, to explain yet again that the burgomasters insisted that, so long as the prisoner was within the town and liberties of Bremen, no offence was to be done against him.

"But I must use handcuffs to secure him," said Van der Beecke, "like any other prisoner."

"Neither handcuffs nor anything of the kind," said Clapmeyer. "When once you are out of the town and its dominion you may proceed according to your own good pleasure; but within their territory the

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burgomasters and council will suffer nothing that can aggrieve a man whom they have treated, whether or no, in accordance with his birth and condition."

What Van der Beecke might have adduced against this demand, which he regarded as a departure from all established customs and regulations, cannot be recorded; the secretary who prolonged his visit till mid-day, repeatedly insisted on what he declared to be utterances of the authorities, and the law officers were compelled to pledge themselves to obey it.

Geestdorp had meanwhile ordered four coaches in which they were to travel, and at about three o'clock the party proceeded first to the inn where the soldiers and serving men had put up, and then, escorted by them, to the headquarters. Here, even before they reached the spot, they saw that a crowd of citizens and soldiers had assembled, whose angry and threatening looks

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promised ill. No sooner had they drawn up than instructions were sent out requiring the lieutenant to wait upon the officer of the watch, whom he found in the guard-room, with Mortaigne and several other officers who made a circle round him.

"Lieutenant Geestdorp," said the major, "here is your prisoner; having been taken into custody by me, I deliver him over into your hands; but I swear to you that if, on pretence of the requirements of justice or on any other plea, the smallest disrespect is shown him, I myself, and all these gentlemen my colleagues, will avenge it on you." And as he spoke he slapped his breast and then twirled his moustache with a ferocious air.

"I have received a message to that effect from their worships the burgomasters," replied Geestdorp, "and am quite willing to act accordingly."

"That is well," said the major, "and in

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that case you may take the jonker into your own charge."

"And the sooner the better," replied Geestdorp taking leave of the officers, and going out forthwith to call in his men.

"I will conduct him hither out of the guard-room," said he to Van der Beecke. "But we must take double precautions against his escape; let your colleague Broekman get into the chaise to receive him; then do you step into it after him; you will thus have him between you in your charge. Keep close behind the van-guard; we shall immediately follow in the other chaises."

Thus, having, as he thought, taken every possible precaution, Geestdorp called up his men-at-arms to follow him to the guard-room; however, though he was admitted, his escort was stopped at the entrance by the Bremen soldiery, and roughly driven away from the door. The lieuten-

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ant was obliged to return alone to the room, where he asked Mortaigne whether he were ready. Mortaigne replied only with a bow, and then greeting the major he begged him to accept his thanks for the courteous manner in which he had been treated.

"I wish you a pleasant journey, Jonker," said the officer. "And that the issue may be in every respect more fortunate than your enemies desire," he added, with a strange and meaning look.

Mortaigne, with another bow, followed Geestdorp down stairs. The soldiers of the guard, having seen that their efforts to penetrate into the guard-house were in vain, had drawn up in a circle round the chaise so as to prevent the prisoner's escape at any rate. Broekman was sitting in the vehicle, and Van der Beecke stood by the door, while the bailiffs assisted him on either side in keeping back the mob which

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pushed forward. No sooner was Mortaigne in the street than Van der Beecke put out a hand to help him into the vehicle; but Mortaigne, setting one foot on the step and the other on the hind-wheel before any one was aware of what he was about, had climbed not into but on to the chaise; he leaped nimbly over the heads of the soldiers on the other side of it, came down safely on his feet, pushed his way through the throng, which parted willingly to let him pass, and ran as fast as his legs could carry him to a house where he saw a Turk's head on the front. The door was shut; but at his approach it flew open; he rushed in: some one took him by the hand, and looking up he recognized the faithful Vollenhove.

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CHAPTER XII.

In which the story ends; virtue is not rewarded; crime is not punished; and the reader is left ill-content.

WHEN Mortaigne and his followers had been stopped at the gates of Bremen, as has been related, Vollenhove had very rightly perceived that, if he were captured with his master, it would be quite out of his power to do anything to help him. He therefore rode through the town, where he had been before and so knew his way, as fast as his horse could gallop, and out at the gate on the other side, never drawing rein till he reached the next village. Here he found an opportunity of selling his horse and then made his way northwards on foot, till he once more reached the bank of the Wezer. Having disguised himself as best

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he might he got back into Bremen on board a barge, and had gone to the landlord of the *White Swan*, an old acquaintance of his who, he felt sure, would not betray him.

Here he devoted himself to devising some means of rescuing his master. It soon came to his ears that the Swedish Resident had espoused Mortaigne's cause and that the Swedish population generally were taking his part. This determined his course of action; he sought out a Swedish recruiting officer and enlisted under his colours, which gave him the privilege of coming and going where and as he would, without let or hinderance, since he was now under the protection of the Crown of Sweden. He constantly frequented the beer-houses and taverns, and other public places constantly singing the praises of Mortaigne, first to his new comrades and then to the Swedish watermen. His mas-

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ter's cause was soon regarded by them as one involving their country's honour, and there was not a pot-house where the Dutch were not reviled for wanting to sacrifice a gentleman and an officer in the Swedish service to private revenge. Nor was this all. The good citizens of Bremen, whenever they happened to meet him in a tavern, were plainly made to understand what a disgrace it would be to them to allow that Dutch thief-takers should come and carry off a man of rank and birth out of the free town of Bremen, as though he were a common vagabond; and mine host of the *White Swan*, speedily convinced by Vollenhove's reasoning, was not the least eager in urging on his fellow-citizens to do their utmost to hinder such a disgrace.

Thus the popular mind was already in a ferment when the letter arrived announcing the advent of Geestdorp and his escort. Vollenhove now redoubled his

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efforts. He knew that he could reckon on certain support, and everything now depended on his taking his measures wisely. The road to Delmenhorst and Wilthuizen, as well as the river, was sharply watched by Swedish soldiers, and the innkeeper's father-in-law was persuaded to allow his house, just opposite the city headquarters, to be opened as refuge for Mortaigne. The Bremen soldiers, even, were half won over to the cause, and it was not difficult to find one among them who would undertake to put into the prisoner's hand the note in which Vollenhove instructed his master how to act. The result we have already seen.

Swift as Mortaigne had been in his daring escape from the hands of his gaolers, and great as was their consternation, Geestdorp, who had been suspicious of his prisoner from the first, did not lose his head; he jumped into the chaise at one

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door and out at the other, flew after the runaway with his men at his heels; and, in spite of the crowd, who with the Swedish sailors and soldiers made strenuous efforts to stop them, he and his little troop reached the house opposite before those inside could shut the door, and forced their way in. One of the soldiers, by rushing down the passage, had indeed recaptured Mortaigne when Vollenhove struck him a a blow in the chest which sent him sprawling. On this one of his comrades was about to draw his sword, but Geestdorp, who very wisely feared the consequences which, in a foreign town, must have ensued on any deed of violence, forbid anything of the kind. This precaution on the part of the lieutenant, however praiseworthy in it itself, was ill-adapted to achieve his purpose of recapturing the prisoner, for it relieved the fears of the owner of the house and his wife who, arming themselves

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with brooms, fell upon the Dutch men-at-arms. The master's vehement outcry of: "Would you do me a violence in my own house?" added fuel to the wrath of the populace outside; with the host of the *White Swan* at their head, they now made their way in, wildly shouting "Dutch dogs — what business have you here? Out of this house! Kill them — smite them dead!"

Very soon Geestdorp and his men found the position no longer tenable; beaten, stormed at, and exhausted, they were compelled to retire, some with the loss of a hat, or with a broken head, back across the market-place, still fighting, as far as the guard-house, where the two bailiffs had very wisely remained sitting in the chaise, regarding it as beneath their dignity to mingle in the fray.

"Is this the treatment you allow us to be exposed to?" said Geestdorp to the

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major, who, standing at the head of his men in front of the headquarters, had looked on at these proceedings with unmoved equanimity and some secret satisfaction.

"I handed the man over to your keeping," replied the major with a shrug, "and there my responsibility ended. It was your business to take care that he did not escape."

"I do not know what their worships the burgomasters will think of the matter," Geestdorp went on, "but at any rate I hope that they will protect my escort against further rough treatment. You see that not one of them has used his weapons, and that your citizens were the aggressors; and you — yourself a soldier — can never wish to see warriors overpowered by the mob."

This speech seemed to make some impression on the Bremer officer; he allowed

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the lieutenant and his men to take shelter in the guard-house, and ordered his subalterns to keep the crowd out. When those who had been hurt had bound up their wounds as best they could, and the crowd had slowly dispersed, singing in uproarious triumph, Geestdorp and Van der Beecke made their way to the town-hall, where the burgomasters were assembled, to report the events of the day to their worships. They found that, as was to be expected, the council had already been informed of all that had taken place, down to the smallest details, and had even given orders—probably to avoid the suspicion of complicity, or at least a dilatory action—that the gates of the New Town should be closed, and the houses searched for the fugitive.

"We shall certainly find him," said the burgomaster; "he cannot have got away. The council has learned with deep regret

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that you have been so roughly handled, and if you can point out the men who were guilty of the assault you may depend on their being adequately punished."

"It would be difficult to point any one out with certainty," said Geestdorp. "But our complaint is against your officers and soldiers rather than the towns folk. They looked on at the affair without troubling themselves to help us in the least."

"What would you have had them do?" asked the burgomaster. "If they had taken your part they would have got the worst of it; the rage and numbers of the populace were overwhelming. But make yourself easy; a notice shall be issued that no one is to shelter the accused on pain of death; the gates are closed, and every house we may have reason to suspect shall be thoroughly searched."

In spite, however, of these measures, which stopped the exits from the town for

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three days; in spite even of the fact that all those citizens and soldiers who were charged with having abetted Mortaigne's evasion were taken into custody, the fugitive himself was not to be found. The sympathy he had won on all sides was so great that no one seemed inclined to give the smallest indication which might set the authorities on his traces; while, on the other hand, as a result of these proceedings, the Dutch soldiery were hated more and more. It was understood that the Swedes had set a watch over all the roads out of the town, and would not allow a vessel of any kind to pass out by the Wezer without searching it narrowly, while they had billeted above a hundred men at Wilthuizen to hinder the retreat of Geestdorp and his company. They, finding that they could not go out in the street without being exposed to insult, and daily fearing some worse treatment, besought the chief

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burgomaster's permission to depart, taking with them the Mortaigne's still captive servant. This petition was laid before the town council, who signified their consent; and on the 16th of April Geestdorp and his party, with their prisoner, set out from Bremen very early in the morning, by the way suggested to them by Wachmans, and returned to their own country without further adventure.

After their departure the New Town was released from what may be called a state of siege, and the consequence was that Mortaigne had no longer any difficulty in quitting Bremen, disguised, as it afterwards came out, in the garb of a milk-woman.

This was the end of the business. Nothing now remains to be told but the outcome of the affair as regards the fate of some of the persons concerned.

Mortaigne made his way to Sweden where he joined the army, without trou-

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bling himself much about the sentence pronounced against by the Court of Holland, whereby it declared him a rebel against the law, and condemned him to be first imprisoned and then beheaded, and his head displayed on a pike. Vollenhove was standard-bearer to the company of which his master was captain, and so remained in his service.

The Count of Kuilenburg took the humiliation he had suffered so deeply to heart that he quitted the country, and went to Hungary where his uncle, the head of the house of Waldeck, held a high position in the imperial army, fighting against the Turks. It would even seem that his dejection over the catastrophe contributed to shorten his days; at any rate he died that same year, leaving no children. Thus his estate came into the hands of his uncle who soon stood as high in the favour of the Dutch government as his nephew had fallen low in disgrace.

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Long before his master, indeed before the high commissioners had left Kuilenburg, Chavallerie had fled from all the possible unpleasantness he had to fear, and had repaired to the imperial camp where he found employment.

The States-general and the legal authorities were but ill-pleased at the outcome of Geestdorp's mission to Bremen. The servant he had brought back with him was examined, but discharged as soon as it appeared that he had not entered Mortaigne's service till that gentleman was beyond the frontier, and so could not have aided in the commission of the crime. The States-general wrote a somewhat violent letter to the Municipality of Bremen, accusing them of the small zeal they had manifested, and required them to take care at least that the guilty were duly punished. The authorities at Bremen, fearing a quarrel with their high mightinesses, expressed

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themselves ready to comply with their demands; several persons who had abetted Mortaigne's concealment and escape were deprived of their offices or emoluments; others were outlawed. As to the soldiers who had captured him at the gates of Bremen, they never claimed the prize which had been offered for his apprehension.

Geestdorp, as the reward of all the annoyance to which he had been exposed at Bremen, and the blows he had received, was brought before the Court, degraded from his rank, and banished from his country. The principal crime alleged against him, it would seem, was that he had been from the first too yielding to the demands and behests of the Bremen authorities, and had not maintained the dignity of the State he represented by taking a more imposing attitude. A similar fate befel the chevalier Struyck as a punishment for having aided

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Mortaigne to escape from Kuilenburg by lending him his hat and cloak.

But no one came off so badly as the luckless Goldestede. He, as we have seen, was taken into custody at the ferry-house at Kuilenburg, and transferred to the Hague. Being brought for trial before the Dutch tribunal he was condemned — notwithstanding that he had done nothing but obey his master's orders in a matter of which he knew little or nothing — on the 13th of May, "to be conveyed to the place where such sentence is commonly executed and there to be flogged with a rope, but so that death shall not ensue," which sentence was in fact carried out; "whence we may see," says Aitzema very acutely, "that it was the innocent who paid the piper."

The other persons concerned with Mortaigne took good care to keep out of reach of the arm of justice. Tyssen alone, the driver who had returned from Alfen with

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the chaise in which the young lady had been carried off, was taken into custody, flogged and banished from the Provinces.

And Catharine d'Orléans of whom the reader has lost sight since we left her at Kuilenburg, of whom indeed we have scarcely had more than a glimpse from the first—was she ever seen again at the Hague? Did she withdraw altogether from the world? Did she marry Mortaigne after all, though forbidden by the legal authorities? Or did she become the bride of her cousin Mauregnault?—Alas, kind reader, I can give you no further information on these points. My heroine is lost to view, for this is history and not fiction.

THE END.

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